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PROMISE

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A LADY OF LEISURE [*Second Impression*

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HATCHWAYS

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FOUR PLAYS FOR CHILDREN [*Third Impression*

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PROMISE

BY

ETHEL SIDGWICK

AUTHOR OF "SUCCESSION," "HERSELF,"
"A LADY OF LEISURE," "DUKE JONES,"
"THE ACCOLADE," ETC.

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TO MY FATHER

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I. HENRIETTE

(PROLOGUE)

I

When Henriette Lemaure married James Edgell, whom she had met by chance at a watering-place in Brittany, opinion as to her reasons was divided. Those who knew her best said that she did it to annoy her father. Those rather less acquainted with her said that it was nothing but love of effect, a thing to which all the Lemaures were prone. Those who knew her least of all, the casual public who looked on at the proceedings of the pair by the sea at St. Aviel, gave the simpler reason that she had fallen in love with Jem; and it is probable, as not unusually happens, that absent theorists were wrong, and ignorant onlookers were right.

As for the reasons of her falling in love, they were, for the theorists, further to seek. Jem belonged to a nation with whom, Henriette had frequently declared to everybody, she had no patience. He was more than twice her age, for she was still under twenty when he met her first. He was poor and quite undistinguished, for his work lay on the railway which was to open up that portion of the coast, and draw throngs of the bourgeois and the English to its summer resorts. He loved her—but then that was not unheard of in a man who had access to a week of Mlle. Lemaure's holiday society. Most of the men of her party were her adorers, and it was understood by those who knew, that she was half-betrothed to Raymond Savigny, the rising scientist, whom her father wished her to marry. It may have been that Jem's solemnity and solidity enticed her to his conquest: for he left her in doubt as to the state of his feelings even when she caused him to suffer most; and to the minute of his offering himself, she was not sure if he really cared for her at all.

Perhaps no man of the many Henriette had practised upon was ever so tormented as Jem, during those wonderful days of public encounters and stolen meetings; but he bore it with hardly a sign, and Henriette declared fifty times to her dearest

friend of the moment that she detested him. All the same, she accepted him in a whirl of joy, and told him to follow her to Paris as soon as possible, that she might enjoy the distressing effect of his appearance there on her father, her brothers, and more particularly Dr. Savigny.

Henriette came of a noted family of artists, and herself, though the youngest of the Lemaures, was not undistinguished. She had lately passed brilliantly out of the Conservatoire, and had given one concert to a public which thronged to hear her play, largely for the pleasure of looking at her; for her beauty was of the direct and vivid type which takes all tastes equally; and even her women rivals granted it, while they added that she was a shrew who would shortly break her wonderful father's heart.

However, not a little to his daughter's disappointment, M. Lemaure liked Jem, though there is no doubt that he suffered some distress and anxiety over the affair. Henriette had explained to her lover with such a wealth of coloured detail the difficulties which stood in his path, that it seemed a runaaway match was the one possible course with a family of tyrants such as she represented; and he was more than a little amazed to find her father both dignified and considerate to him; only a little distracted and concerned for the friend of his who loved Henriette, and whom she had treated so carelessly.

Henriette for her part had a vague idea that if she provoked Jem and Raymond sufficiently, a duel might come of it, which would figure in the papers, and so finally succeed in infuriating her eldest brother, who was on the whole the person whom of all she preferred to annoy; for in the intervals of breaking his heart she adored M. Lemaure, who had been father and mother in one to her, as well as teacher in chief; and who had spoilt her with the same fine delicacy and thoroughness which distinguished other arts in his hands.

But Dr. Savigny, like the rest of Henriette's men, did not quite rise to the part assigned to him. He withdrew silently, and plunged into dismal vistas of medical research, where Henriette abandoned him gladly. And she married Jem in triumph, after having succeeded in luring him into a few acrid disputes with her brother Lucien, which afforded her much

mischievous delight; for Lucien regarded himself in the family as the one serious critic and protector of his little sister, though Henriette had taken the trouble frequently to assure him in words, and prove to him in actions, that her taste was neither to be criticised nor protected.

M. Lemaure the elder concealed his misery at parting with her, although he knew that her exile might be prolonged; for James had the trick of talking of the world as his home; had already wandered much, and would in all probability wander more when the business of the Breton railway was completed; and Henriette thought Jem's talk of distant lands most delightful and original, and was convinced that she would shine in the society of either Cairo, Japan, or Mexico, if necessary. Indeed she saw herself with pleasure in Spanish costume on horseback in the latter country: and had already promised Lucien a photograph.

"Of course, darling," said Henriette with tears to her father at parting, "your ménage will go to pieces without me: as you never even remember which meal it is unless I tell you, especially when you are writing. But it *is* better than if I had run away with him, as I very nearly did, without consulting you at all, isn't it?"

"Evidently;" her father gently answered, "since this way I have the pleasure of M. Edgell's acquaintance: and the still more exquisite pleasure, dearest, of buying you a trousseau."

"Precisely," said Henriette, embracing him: wept bitterly in his arms for some minutes, and left him. It was a little consoling after all in her anguish to reflect upon her new clothes, and to know that her dearest rival at the Conservatoire, Suzanne Schindler, was grinding her teeth with jealousy in the third row at church.

After that M. Lemaure saw no more of Henriette, as he expected, for a long time. He was old, and very busy with his playing, teaching, and writing; and James was poor, and could not afford long journeys for himself or his family. So that the father had to be content with letters, most irregular and unconventional, like all things connected with Henriette, but brimming, when they came, with love to him,

and pride in the new interests and possessions of her home in Brittany.

It seemed that the possession which interested her most, as time went on, was a certain baby: of which Henriette talked with pleased surprise, as of a new and slightly alarming toy. It had been a great trouble to her on its arrival, but she grew used to it; and presently, as it came through the ailments of its earlier years into comparative health and beauty, she began to boast about it vigorously, comparing it with other children she had seen, immensely to their disadvantage. Coming through that stage again, the baby became a very troublesome small boy, closely resembling, as far as M. Lemaure could gather, in precocity and ingenuity, a certain small girl he had known. At this stage his scapegrace daughter grew exultant, and detailed with enthusiasm the hand-to-hand conflicts of Phil and his father; in which, according to her view, Philip frequently got the best of it—at any rate morally; though Jem had a way, physically, of retaining the upper hand.

There was another baby, but it was evidently rather an anti-climax, coming when Philip was nearly six years old, and at his very best and most reprehensible period. It was a healthy, good little thing, apparently, and Jem was ridiculously fond of it, owing no doubt to his English taste for what was "proper," which Henriette was always throwing up against him. When Henriette brought Philip to Paris, at eight years old, it is quite probable that she would have left Bébé at home with the bonne, had not Jem insisted on his accompanying them.

For a glorious and memorable week Henriette resumed her old position of housekeeper and spoiled child in her father's appartement, with the extra diversion by the way of showing off her beautiful firstborn to her former circle of friends and adorers; and Philip had poured upon his young head an amount of admiration which would have wrecked a less level-headed youngster for life. And in the meantime the "proper" Bébé played a trick upon his mother behind her back, by taking possession of his grandfather's heart as he had of his father's already: and by holding that citadel, with a firmness astonishing at his age, against all comers. M.

Lemaure would hardly let the child out of his arms; yet it was not at all Henriette's image that he saw in her child's face; but something nearer and stranger still, some quick thrill of sympathy, which even then, before the child could properly speak, or receive the impression of speech from others, linked grandfather and grandson with a bond of felt communion. And it was an uprooting when the inevitable parting came, that the old man mourned like a double desertion: that of the daughter he had recovered, and of the grandson he had found.

It was not for some little time after this that Bébé became interesting in his turn; and it was then, curiously enough, in the way that Henriette least expected.

She had been determined from the first to make Philip a musician. It was so obvious that he ought to be, that it was long before Henriette would believe the evidence of her own eyes and ears. She bent herself to the task with a whole-hearted enthusiasm which seemed certainly quite copious enough for two; but do what she would, she could never inspire him with her soul. Her creed he accepted—critically. Philip was always critical, even in his earliest years. He was terribly reasonable, incorrigibly serene over his music, and would watch his mother's reverent fervour with a sort of inquiring sympathy that made her fling her arms in the air, at her wits' end whether to laugh or cry. He played little duets very nicely with her at seven years old, having, as she often declared, a pair of hands that were wasted upon him; not to mention a lively intelligence, and a patient devotion to her that was really touching in such a hot-headed, tempestuous little sinner as Philip was at this age.

But the day came when she turned upon him with her final benediction. At the end of an excellent and careful performance she kissed him with great solemnity: and then advanced to James, indicating the performer with her outstretched bow: "Take him," said Henriette. "He is yours, not mine. He is a good, dear, *clever* boy; but he is a born amateur."

And from that day forward she turned to concentrate her hope and attention on the second child.

Almost as soon as she did so she made discoveries.

She broke the great news in a single letter of triumph to her father when the child was three; and M. Lemaure smiled over it, and refrained from informing her that he had discovered it himself at least a year before. He had watched the little Antoine on his knee one evening while Lucien was playing, and while Henriette, always impatient of her brother's performance, was attending to visitors and Philip. He did not tell his daughter then for his own reasons; perhaps having pity upon the sensitive ear and tender spirit of two years old, if the whirlwind of the mother's unguarded raptures should then fall upon it. Instead he treasured quietly the truth he had discovered, and waited; so certain of it, however, that, as his daughter discovered much later, he actually bought a beautiful little violin that happened to come his way, and saved it for the moment when it should be called for.

He answered Henriette's letter instantly with one of almost severe advice, the wisdom of which she exalted high to her husband as she read, and which she promptly forgot or ignored in her dealings with Antoine when it failed to hit the precise humour of the moment. For a time she was charmed with this neglected toy of hers, and tried every conceivable experiment upon him, ear and nerves; until James himself stepped down and intervened; for there was to his reasonable eye an imminent possibility of the child growing to loathe the thing that affected him so strangely, and which was thus continually forced upon his attention, in and out of season. Henriette pouted a little at not being allowed to show him off to the extent she wished among her friends, as she had previously shown off Philip. But though she flouted Jem's remarks on the subject, telling him he knew nothing about such matters, she had some regard to his opinion when he did choose to express it; and after one or two crises with the child, she pursued investigations more gently, though not with less excitement.

His ear, there was no doubt at least, was most delicate and perfect. He felt through his ear—it was in that way that emotion naturally reached him. He had at times the listening look that is generally seen in the faces of the blind, though he possessed a pair of dark eyes that were bright and quick

enough to see. Especially out of doors this still look would come to him. A rising lark in the fields, the bees in the fuchsias in the garden, the rustle of the poplars in the wind—best of all to Antoine, the sigh of the sea upon the shore, were so many vivid joys to him, just as a harsh voice or a sudden noise was pain. A storm, common enough on their coasts in the winter time, with the grating crash of the waves on the beach and the hurrying howl of the wind, was an excitement almost too great to be borne; and a thunderstorm was all his life no less than agony.

The power of her own playing upon him the spoiled artist-mother soon discovered. Henriette had an incorrigible habit of practising her powers upon every mortal—man, woman, or child—who crossed her path. No matter whether the weapon she chose for the purpose were her beauty, her wit, her art, or, for want of anything better, her temper, conquer she would by one means or another. Her husband and her rebellious elder son were happily under the sway of her beauty and spirit combined; and the same weapons would have been more than sufficient to quell the younger, even had he needed quelling. Yet Henriette had found a new sceptre in her bow: and she used it now to soothe him, and now to excite, often careless herself completely as to which she was doing, or why she was doing it.

Henriette had an admiring friend, a Russian princess, at the neighbouring château to their village, and she was constantly there to play to her and be petted. Jem endeavoured to prevent her taking the children, for the crowd of fashionable folk that came and went there in the summer time seemed to him the worst society possible for impressionable babes such as his; and he would gladly have kept clear of them entirely had Henriette permitted it. But she had been accustomed to company and admiration before her marriage, and now, when a chance of such presented itself, flew to it instantly like the pretty moth she was.

Jem kept a clear picture long afterwards of a certain night when, returning late and weary from his work, he found her resting from a campaign at the château, where she had spent the day with Antoine. She was in radiant good humour, for

she had been a great success, and had displayed a new dress to advantage. The dress and the good humour she promptly used to practise upon Jem in turn ; and he had no objection, so long as he was allowed to eat his supper and smoke while the exhibition proceeded ; but later, when he went upstairs, he found her practising upon Bébé, and that pleased him less.

Excitable child as he knew her to be, Jem was never hasty with her. He watched her for some time amusing herself with her live plaything before he intervened. She was so lovely to watch that he was often tempted to remain spectator longer than he should.

Bébé, already overdone with a long day's outing, had been roused by her talking below ; and Henriette, passing into the smaller room out of hers where he slept, had discovered him sitting crying in the dark She picked him up and scolded him a little, and presently her presence, or the presence of the kind steady lamp Jem brought upon the scene, took effect.

" Well, what are we to do ? " said Henriette, considering amusements open to herself and Bébé, not without an eye to James as audience. " Tell you a story, eh ? I tell stories very nicely about wolves and bears. Not that, silly ? What then ? Play you a tune ? "

The little hands clutched her ; she lifted her laughing eyes to Jem, who shook his head simply.

" Well," soliloquised Henriette, chin in air, " one of maman's quiet tunes ought to send him to sleep, if he is a nice little proper boy, oughtn't it ? "

Bébé, thus appealed to, nodded fearfully.

" Sit there," said Henriette, placing him with decision in the arm-chair near his bed. " Now you are in the front row, presentation ticket, do you see ? Tuck in your little toes, there's a nice boy. Now look at me and listen."

There was no need to tell him that. He crouched low and motionless in a corner of the chair, with his chin on his clenched hands, and his eyes fastened on his mother, as she took a seat royally facing him, and picked her violin out of its case with a reverent care, in curious contrast with her brusque handling of himself a moment ago.

" Bah ! " she ejaculated as the bow caught in the hanging lace of her sleeve. " I can't play in this stupid thing. Au

diable les convenances." Whereupon she pulled her arms out of the loose robe she was wearing, and let it fall back round her in the chair. "*Now* my hair—of all the plagues!" The impatient action had loosened the heavy knot of hair upon her neck, and it fell suddenly down her back, rapidly uncoiling as it fell. "Hold it back, for mercy's sake, while I tune."

She summoned the critic in her rear by a look to her service, for she intended to have both safely under her spell. It was not hard. The child in front of her, four year old baby as he was, was fascinated, awed, by the poise of the slim white shape against the heavy black masses of hair: and his eyes followed mechanically the gleam of her bare arm, in the movement that is one of the most graceful in the world.

Jem obediently came and stood behind her throne, with one hand gathering back her dusky mane and yielding gently to her movements that he might not hamper her. She gave him a sidelong siren smile before she began, and immediately forgot him in the business of playing.

She played the little Day-dream of Schumann, and played it, as it was intended, for the ears of a child, adding nothing, even in her excitement, to its artlessness; for all Henriette's larger virtues, sympathy, understanding, and self-control, seemed to be imprisoned within her music—hardly able to escape into the ways of common life.

"*Very* good," she commented on herself, as she drew the bow out to the extremest tip on the last note. "Wasn't it, M. le critique?" She extended the bow and touched the motionless child under the chin. Her changeful spirits went up at a bound, at his look of fearful worship. She laid down her instrument with hasty care, and descending from her throne, caught him up almost roughly in her arms. Her hair, twitched from the confining hand, fell in a torrent around them both, almost drowning his little dark head.

"Oh, you little funny thing!" she cried, caressing him vigorously. "Maman does play beautifully, doesn't she? But so shall he some day. Better than maman, and better than grandpapa, and better than any Lemaure of them all. Maman was a mistake, Bébé: just a silly girl. But you will be a man, and great music must be made by men. Oh, how I

used to cry and cry because I could never be a man! But I shall be one after all, for you shall be one for me." She laughed in triumph at the thought. "Oh, Bébé, be quick and grow into a man. Why are you so little? I want it so that I can't wait. Ten—fifteen years: oh, it is impossible. I could cry."

So she could, and very nearly did, from sheer impatience.

"He'll never be a man at all," James observed, "if you keep him awake all night now."

It was his first guarded move. Henriette made a grimace.

"Bring the light in here," she suggested over her shoulder, passing into the larger room. "Then, dearest, you can go downstairs."

Jem attended to half her instructions; then he waited anew, leaning an arm on the chimney-piece. His watch lay in that hand, unseen by those behind him in the room. Time was precious to Jem, but he had his reasons for delay.

She was determined not to give way at once to his wishes, of course, though she was resentfully conscious of them. She paraded the room with her swift graceful gait, hugging the patient child in her arms. Unhampered as she was by the trailing skirts of the day-time, for her discarded robe was lying where she had left it in Antoine's room, she had far more the air of a charming peasant girl than of the dignified, disdainful young woman who had stood before the princess in the château that afternoon. Catching sight of herself in the long mirror as she passed, she laughed with mischievous delight at the picture, and stopped to admire it at her leisure.

"Oh, Bébé, look at us," said she. "Do you see maman, how funny she looks. Oh, what would those people at the château say, if they saw us now! They thought I was such a cruel, cold mother, didn't they? And you so afraid of me, weren't you? Aha!—as if I was going to show them how proud I was of you—all those stupid, gaping men. You are not afraid of poor maman, pet, are you? Not now: and not very much ever: only a little bit, when you are a stupid goose, and make her cross. Say you are not afraid of her now, Bébé, darling."

He shook his head, his eyes on her face in the glass. But fear was in the gaze, just as indisputably as was solemn bliss,

and the worship which Henriette regarded. Conscious of that, she did not trouble about the rest.

"Good boy," she said gaily. "Now tell me what we are like together, you and I."

"Notre Dame!" said the child, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, after a moment's intent regard. The attitude, the flowing hair, the light of the distant lamp behind her head, brought naturally enough to his mind the highly-coloured pictures he had often seen in the cottages of the fishermen in the village.

Henriette laughed aloud.

"Notre Dame—oh, you naughty little boy! And you, you are then—fi donc, what would papa say? Shock—ing. I hope he was not listening."

She hoped he was, and tried to catch a glimpse of his face in the glass; but apparently he had his back to them, so she continued: "Besides, I am not the least like that, stupid. Look again. Nothing half so 'fade' as a saint. See, I am bohémienne, am I not? Yes, now I will tell you. I am la belle Esmeralda—oh, you don't know her. She was ever so pretty, and she danced in the street, the dirty Paris street, down below where grandpapa lives—yes. And she danced so beautifully, that everybody fell in love with her, great lords and poor poets—everybody, think of it. And she had bare feet, and a petticoat short like maman's to let them be seen." Henriette sighed. "If it were not for papa and the 'convenances,' I would take off my stockings and show you, so I would."

She cast another resentful look at the dark reflected figure. "And I will tell you what else she had," she proceeded. "She had a little, little white goat—all white, like Blanquette in the story papa read you. You remember that Blanquette, who fought with the wolf?"

Bébé smiled shy assent: he remembered it very well.

"But this poor Esmeralda has no white goat, has she?" Henriette said plaintively. "Nothing but a little black lamb; and what's the good of that? Not even horns, has he? Let maman feel." She ran her strong delicate fingers through his hair, and he laughed and hid his face in a rapture almost too great to be borne.

"No, nothing but black wool. Silly Bébé: say then, how can you fight the wolf without any horns?"

"Is there a wolf?" Antoine murmured doubtfully.

"Of course! Wait a minute and I will show you. There—no, silly, he won't hurt you here. Look over there in the glass; do you see? A horrid, old grey wolf, waiting to eat us up for his supper."

"But that's papa—papa isn't a wolf."

"He is, I tell you. Darling, how you resemble grandpapa when you laugh! I must absolutely embrace you for looking so like grandpapa." Madame succumbed on the spot to the necessity.

"But he won't eat us," protested the child, when she released him.

"Not you," smiled Henriette. "It's me he is simply longing to eat. Longing—look at him!"

"Why doesn't he?"

"Shall I tell you? Hush, it's because he is so lazy. English grey wolves are lazy, dull old things. They never catch the little French lambs. And as for a gypsy like maman—aha! he would not try! If he came growling up to me and showing his teeth—you would see!"

"Papa doesn't growl," objected his loyal son, but rather faintly.

The figure in the glass looked very stern and dark. He stared at it, and at the same instant Jem turned about.

"Henriette, put that wretched child to bed at once. Are you aware it is nearly twelve o'clock?"

"Hou, hou! fit le loup," Madame quoted softly and at random from the story of the goat. "You hear, Bébé? What did I say?"

Then she swung round, chin in air.

"Midnight, you were saying? Then surely it seems that some one is wasting his time."

"Yes," said James. "I shall have wasted just thirty-five minutes unless you put him to bed at once."

"Poor papa!" murmured Henriette, studying him with dancing eyes. "He is in our hands, behold, Bébé. What shall we do with him! Send him au diable—or put you to bed? Eh?" She bent her beautiful mischievous face to the child.

Antoine's wide eyes were on Jem. "I will go to sleep soon, in bed," he whispered into her hair.

"Oh," said Henriette, annoyed. "You intolerable child. That was not at all the right thing to say, when I have amused you so nicely. I shall have to teach you manners." She balanced him on her arm for a moment. "You are very heavy, too; much too heavy to carry all these hours, if I had thought of it. Well ——" She stepped swiftly into his little room, and tossed him down.

"Go to bed then, and to sleep quick, or maman will be angry; do you hear? How dare you be so wide awake at midnight?"

He curled up tightly at once, squeezing his little hands closely over his face. He was well used already to these rapid changes of manner in this dreadful goddess-mother when she played with him.

Henriette marched into her own room, with a last glance of defiance at the critic on the hearth; and Jem, pocketing his watch, went downstairs to his work.

But later, when his wife was asleep, he slipped up again into the little room, and bent above the child. After a minute or so he picked him up in his arms, for in spite of Bébé's heedful stillness, he was gasping audibly with a sort of contained terror and excitement, most unusual in such a young child.

Jem held him for a time in silence, and then carried him to the window which opened on the bay. The great white moon had risen above the sea, and the wind blew occasionally in gentle singing gusts, making the fuchsia bushes in their bare shore-garden bend and listen. It blew in at the window a little, and brought the keen scent of the seaweeds on the shore.

Jem looked abroad, and Bébé listened; and after a period the child stopped trembling, and the man's knit brow relaxed. Peace had come to them both, though the father said no word of soothing at all. The haven of his arms was enough, he thought, to prove security to that small frightened spirit. It had proved so before, and so it proved again.

He only received one confidence, after a long time.

"I d-did want to go to sleep," said Antoine, in his baby French. "I did try. And then I could not any more, because I tried so hard."

II

THE first and last time that Antoine heard his grandfather perform in public was when he was six years old, and it happened by quite an extraordinary chance.

M. Lemaure, as he approached his seventieth year, definitely abandoned the public platform, and attended to the writing, which all his life he had preferred. He had played for his living in his youth, and the work could never be dissociated in his memory with that painful struggle for the bare means of existence, which can disfigure with its sordid touch the most triumphant art. Doubtless he loved his violin, as he had made the listening thousands love it; but he had a touch of the feeling towards it which the factory-girl has to her loom, or the street-hawker to his pony; and he let the good servant rest with bare regret, and took up the kind and quiet pen, through which from his brain the thoughts flowed quite as simply: and among the issue of which the noisy and undiscerning crowd could not penetrate. In fact, as he said with a smile, he was old: much as a few other people had been old before him; thankful for a life which had interested him, but thankful to have it done, and to rest in the retreat he loved.

But one fateful day, a small European potentate came to enjoy the sea-breezes at St. Aviel, where Henriette had first met Jem; and for his royal entertainment a private concert was arranged and announced at the hotel where he was staying; and to the electrification of Madame Henriette, it was announced privately to her by her father that he would attend as the soloist in chief. He had known the prince intimately in younger days in Germany. The prince had written to him with his own hand, and with such flattering urgency that M. Lemaure found himself unable to refuse the honour, and so capitulated gracefully; feeling indeed that two nights under his daughter's roof might well compensate for the trouble and fatigue such an expedition might cost him.

Henriette's delight and excitement knew no bounds, and Jem had a very remarkable breakfast on the morning that the

letter arrived at Porslanec; for it was naturally impossible to think of such a detail as pouring coffee when real music and a visit from papa were simultaneously in prospect.

"Imagine—the Concerto of all things," she said, walking the breakfast-room in high excitement. "What a feast for us, isn't it, Bébé? A feast for the gods, yes: if it were not that the orchestra will of course be miserable, and the audience—pfui! —besotted. The hall will be packed with your English—heap of impenetrable icicles—I know them!"

"It's after the season," Jem remarked. "My English may have gone home."

"Not they," retorted Henriette, "so long as a prince is there. There they will be all sitting like dummies in their best clothes—good gracious!" She dropped back in her chair.

"Well?" said Jem, who had come round to her side to get himself some coffee.

"I have no clothes—but none at all! And besotted icicles or not, they will be perfectly dressed: and we shall get seats in front of the hall beyond a doubt. To think that I should never have thought of that."

"Oh well," said Jem. "You'll have a bit of time to turn it over." He smiled down at her where she sat; Henriette was very clever, and not as extravagant as one might have expected. Personally, Jem could not imagine why she ever troubled to change her dress, but he thought it wiser not to tell her so too often.

M. Lemaure was to reach St. Aviel in the afternoon, attend a rehearsal at the hotel, and come on to them before night; he would not definitely say when, for like his daughter, he was full of foreboding as to the condition of the orchestra with which it was to be his fate to play. But Fate and the prince were more generous to him than he had expected, and when he arrived in the late afternoon he reported that provision had been made, musically, regardless of expense, and that "everybody had been most kind."

"Now I wonder," said Henriette, sitting on the arm of his chair, "what that means? I suppose that they did not order you about as though you were a raw prize-winner just out of the Conservatoire."

"What I mean is," said M. Lemaure, leaning back, "that the rehearsal was a success: and that I am ——"

"Content," said Henriette, supplying a word the Lemaures used in a manner of their own.

"Unusually so!" said her father, his hand on hers. "This is a most beautiful home you have, Henriette."

"Beautiful?" said Henriette, putting up her lip. She had a curious blindness to natural beauty, and she had made a custom of regarding the fishing village she inhabited as "triste." "The sea is a nice colour," she admitted, looking out at the wide glory from the verandah where they sat.

"It is good for the children, eh?"

"Well," said Henriette thoughtfully, "they have not drowned one another at present; though Philippe very nearly succeeded with Bébé the other day. He is always trying, but so far without success. The tide comes in so rapidly that the old women down there have some shocking stories. But somehow, papa dear, I do not believe they will get drowned."

"You leave it to Fate," her father suggested.

"Something like that, yes. Down there they call it 'le bon Dieu.'"

M. Lemaure was devout, so that Henriette chose naturally such remarks in his presence. But she never succeeded in shocking him as she wished. He only smiled now while she continued:

"One of those women gave Philippe a charm to wear, because they thought the sea would steal him. I think it was the sea, or the devil, or St. Michael. Any character does for them. You had better ask Bébé; he knows all the stories."

Henriette glanced towards the children. She had bundled her family hastily out, because she wanted her father to herself when he arrived, and was jealous of all his attention. His eyes were frequently upon them, for M. Lemaure was very fond of children: yet considerate of her wish he did not summon them to him.

The pair sat bare-legged on the verandah steps, Bébé very obviously being teased by Philip, who was confiding some ghastly details of a story he had heard or imagined, which his younger brother did not at all wish to hear. The child sat backed against a verandah pillar, his shoulders hunched very

dramatically, attentive horror in every line of attitude and features, and with wide eyes fastened on his brother's face.

Seeing it, the mother laughed. "Bébé looks as if he saw a ghost, doesn't he? Phil!"

Philip turned round. He was now a boy of eleven, well-grown and handsome, and very well aware of his own importance, which indeed his mother took no pains to conceal from him.

"Dearest, come and show grandpapa the charm the widow Fantec gave you."

"He believes it all," said Philip, nodding backwards to Antoine with a superior grin, as he rose and came. "There is nothing you can tell him, grandpapa, that he won't believe."

"But I do not," cried Bébé swiftly.

"Oh yes, you do," smiled Philip. "Every word. You wait till twelve to-night, when the wind makes a noise in the chimney. Then you'll believe it fast enough."

The child turned his eyes to his mother; finding no assistance in that quarter, for Henriette was worshipping Philip, he moved them on to the visitor. Growing calmer by degrees, Antoine studied him with attention.

"You remember me?" said his grandfather gently aside.

Bébé slightly shook his head. He had a wonderful pair of dark eyes, that never seemed to look right at anything. M. Lemaure felt they were looking through him now, the horror of Philip's story not quite out of them. He still felt them turned on him from time to time, in the intervals of his mother's voluble chatter.

Henriette examined M. Lemaure about her "monde" at Paris, until he had to beg for mercy.

"For a young person with so few friends, Henriette, it is remarkable how many acquaintances you have. Being a man, and tolerably occupied, I cannot keep au fait with the family affairs of half the city."

Henriette sighed. "Being a man, papa, I cannot expect you to keep au fait with the modes, I suppose?"

"Mamma," said Philip, in dignified reproof. He was now crouching at her side, for she had been showing off the peasant's charm he wore to her father, and still held him captive. A most beautiful little gypsy he looked certainly, with the blouse open at his sunburnt throat, where the thin line of the silver

chain lay across it, and his gleaming wicked eyes much like those of an impatient animal tame under her hand. Henriette loved equally to show Philip, and to show him tame. It was hardly wonderful, her father thought, that such a child should hold all her attention.

"Dear me," said M. Lemaure, "that reminds me. You have not asked your kind father what he has brought you from the Capital, Henriette."

Philip's mother dropped him and leaned forward.

"My precious papa—*not* a hat!"

"I seemed to recall a penchant for millinery when I thought hard upon the subject."

"Where?" Henriette gasped.

"I met Madame Claude at a party: and after apology for mentioning business at such a time, begged her to have pity on me—and on a daughter of mine she might remember."

"I should not wonder," said Henriette, "if she remembers me."

"Nor should I, considering the bills I used to pay her."

"And she is just the single person who ever really grasped my style," said Henriette, sinking backward. "Papa, I adore you. Why did I ever leave you? What colour is it?"

"Well, my dear, you filled two letters with rapture about your new red cloak; so I ventured—black."

"There! Jem, would you ever have thought of that? You would have said blue, in all probability. It never matters one sou to you what I wear."

"Not one sou," said James, who had joined the group inconspicuously some time previously and was sitting beside his younger son on the verandah step.

"Bah!" Henriette dismissed him. "Darling, when it is coming?"

"I found it at the station of St. Aviel, and they promised it here before night. I thought you might need it for the eception, to dazzle the duchesses. Am I right?"

Henriette left her chair, and sank right down on the floor at his feet. She looked about twenty, her father reflected, as he fondled her wonderful hair.

"No grey as yet," he commented.

"None," said she, smiling up at him. "In spite," she added

soon, " of teaching Bébé, who drives me distracted. Aren't you stupid, darling ? " she added as the child looked round. " I tell him a thing one day," Henriette informed her father, " quite clearly : as clearly as I am speaking now to you ; and next day, he has forgotten all about it."

" Do you then tell him again ? " M. Lemaure inquired.

" Sometimes," said Henriette. " Sometimes I shake him : don't I love ? It is so annoying to repeat the same thing over twice."

" It's curious," James commented, catching his father-in-law's eye, " how much the kid has learnt, considering."

" Will you permit him to play to me ? " said M. Lemaure.

There was a pause.

" I am not sure," said Henriette, laying her head on his knee, and looking away. " I have an idea you had better wait another five years, papa, till you come to see me again. What I mean is, you used to be so particular."

" I am still," said her father. " I exepct very little, however, from your teaching."

" Isn't grandpapa disagreeable ? " said Henriette to Antoine, who was looking at her anxiously. They were odd people, these elders of his, but he imagined it was a question of his playing just now, so he had to be ready for a possible sudden command. It came.

" Jump up and fetch your fiddle," said Henriette, clapping her hands, quite as though she intended to make him start. " We shall have to content him, I suppose. And mind you do maman credit, or she will be dreadfully cross with you to-night."

There was silence on the verandah. Jem was always silent ; Henriette was disgustingly nervous, and sat upright and pouting in her chair ; Philip was engaged in finishing the cakes under the table unperceived. M. Lemaure sat and reflected, his eyes on the sea. The performer himself was the most unconcerned member of the party. He returned scolding the demonstrative black poodle, over which he had tumbled as he crossed the room, and took his seat with composure on the edge of a high chair, just within the open French window, amid a thrilling silence which, his elder brother felt acutely, would have utterly " floored " himself in a like situation.

When he had made his preparations, Bébé looked towards his mother for orders. M. Lemaure's eyebrows went up a hair's breadth at the name she mentioned, but he heedfully looked aside from the performer, sitting as still as a statue while he attended. His daughter,whom the first firm sweet note had completely reassured, searched his face eagerly for a response to her exultation : but he did not look once at her. He thanked the child quietly at the end.

" There is another air in the same suite," he said, " a slow one : that I seem to remember as pretty also. You play it, eh ? "

" Maman plays it," said Antoine.

" I considered," said Henriette with dignity, " that the next was too difficult for him at present."

" Perhaps," said her father. " But I wish to be reminded of the tune. Come, my dear." He spoke to the child.

Henriette clenched her hands with vexation : to put him out like this, and when he had played so well ! Yes, he was always like this, her papa, when it came to music. He seemed to lay aside the whole cloak of his gentleness, and become stern, tactless, eccentric—quite another character.

After a short pause of frowning, the child lifted his bow again. He hesitated once in the middle, and his grandfather, now watching closely, thought his nerve would give way. But with a noticeable effort of will he recovered, and completed an almost perfect rendering ; though the manner was dubious and gentle, and the tone soft as though he whispered it, yet with the same purity as before. At the end he looked round the circle, in evident surprise at himself, and then suddenly laughed. Antoine found it decidedly amusing to play things like that on his own account—so unlike lessons under his mother's sharp eye.

His grandfather laughed too, and held out his hand. Henriette sat open-mouthed with amazement.

" I never taught him that," she said half indignantly. " I don't even possess the notes of it. Bébé, how dare you go playing things you have never been taught ? "

" One may amuse oneself occasionally," her father suggested. "Not often in music, I admit ; but at this age, now and then."

He took the child into his arms, and talked to him : not about their common art, but other things. He had no

further curiosity about the music at all, but he had other and profound curiosity. He did not however ask questions: he only talked the most charming nonsense, astonishing indeed in the stern judge of ten minutes before.

He noticed that Antoine, when he laughed, which he had a way of doing suddenly and with as it were the whole of himself, looked always towards his father for sympathy. M. Lemaure found it easy, through him, to draw Jem into conversation, which he wished to do. He talked to him in English, a language which he spoke most correctly and carefully; whereas his daughter, after her twelve years' knowledge of Jem, could hardly put a sentence together. Henriette made a grimace when he began it, and turned aside to amuse herself with Philip.

"These speak your language, do they not?" M. Lemaure asked James, touching Antoine.

"This not so well as the other," said Jem. "Phil's with me so much more for lessons and so on. But you can, can't you?" He turned his keen eyes on Bébé. "What happens when you keep on talking French to papa?"

"You do not speak at all any more," said Bébé.

"A dumb father," said M. Lemaure. "Ah, but that is serious."

"Serious?" Bébé repeated. "That is angry? Papa is not angry then, when he does not speak."

"He thought I was angry the first time I did it," James explained. "Terrified he was—indignant—flew at me in French again and again—no effect at all. Couldn't make it out, could you?"

"It was like to be a dog," cried Bébé.

"But you like dogs, do you not?" said M Lemaure, whose observation of him had been complete.

"Not as a papa," said Antoine, grasping him rather excitedly, for the lack of words hampered him. "A papa, he shall talk; do you see?"

"A papa often don't," said Jem. "Other people talk such a lot."

"Ah, that is of us to be 'bavard,'" said M. Lemaure. "Lemaures have always talked too much. Are you Lemaure, then, my little one?"

"Shouldn't wonder," said Jem, with a glance at the two

heads so near together. "Unless I turn him into English his tongue never stops. French, or the patois, it's all one to him."

"That is three languages," M. Lemaure remarked, "and music makes four. Are there no other lessons than these?"

"Only games on the beach," said Jem. "Go on," as the child came over to him, "tell your grandfather what we do on the beach with maman's big pin."

"Draw, is it?" his grandfather helped him. "What do you draw?"

"Many little wheels," said Antoine, with affectionate expression. All the words came off his foreign tongue with the prettiest careful accent.

"Every kind of circle is a wheel to him," said James. "He's the purest passion for wheels, haven't you, Tony?"

Antoine smiled at the sea. Those lesson-games with his father were delicious in recollection. It was clear to M. Lemaure that Jem had the light hand with children that Henriette lacked.

"Ah! It is your own craft you teach him, then?" M. Lemaure leant forward.

"Early geometry," said Jem guardedly aside. "I daren't go far, he learns so fast: so we call it a game and only play on Sundays. Anyway, the drawing can't do harm."

"Admirable." Then quickly, as the child turned. "And on the sand it is so easy to correct the lines naturally."

Bébé shook his head.

"No." James interpreted. "If it's wrong, it's wrong. Bad work, and you start again."

"Bad work," said Bébé to himself.

After a little, M. Lemaure left them and went in, feeling the chill edge of the sea-breeze, to which they were so well accustomed. He discovered the piano, and from trying it, fell to playing. He was a fine pianist, and his stir of feeling to-night was such as to demand the manifold music of a keyed instrument to express it.

Lost in his improvisation, he did not observe Antoine, who slid into the room from the verandah and sank into the sofa-corner; nor did he heed when, some minutes later, Philip followed, the rapid little drama that ensued between the two.

The fact was that Bébé had been sent to bed by his mother

before his grandfather had begun to play; and this fact his sharp brother instantly divined when he discovered him lingering in his dark corner. Philip was always greatly interested when Antoine chose to be disobedient—disobedience being generally considered under that roof his own particular province. He felt quite warmly towards him now, having reassured himself as to the pleasant state of affairs; and when his grandfather stopped presently for a minute or two, he held his little brother firmly, lest he should seize his chance to say good-night and take his dutiful departure.

"He's not done," the tempter whispered. "Chut, keep still. There's mamma." Henriette glided past them on her way to dress for dinner, laying a loving hand lightly on her father as she passed.

"Go on, darling; there's heaps of time," she said, and swept out without noticing her naughty sons on the sofa.

M. Lemaure, who never much regarded such details as mealtimes, took her at her word; and when she re-entered some twenty minutes later the music had only lately ceased, and Philip in a chair was ingenuously occupied with a book.

"The Evening Star," M. Lemaure murmured as he turned to her; and for such a pretty speech the comparison was singularly just. Her clear, dark beauty was always especially enhanced by white; and it was white she was wearing now, clinging ingénue white, up to her throat and down to her wrists, and vanishing in shadowy undulations behind her on the floor: a virginal style that gave her far more the air of sixteen than the double tale of those years she actually claimed.

Unlike the débutante, however, Madame received the admiration she excited with the indifference born of long custom. She stepped to the middle of the floor and stopped.

"Bébé!" she exclaimed in a ringing tone of displeasure. "Naughty child! What are you doing here?"

Antoine stared at her, still half-dazed by the music whose echoes had hardly died out.

"I sent you to bed," said Henriette majestically, "hours and hours ago. Yes, you may blink at me like an owl, but you know I did. I am extremely vexed with you—extremely." She snapped her bracelet on her wrist with decision; her father should know she was capable of discipline when she chose.

" When I say a thing," she proceeded, " I mean it. Grandpapa might play twenty thousand sonatas, but that should make no difference at all. And now, tiresome child, it is ten minutes to dinner-time, and you will have to wait for your supper, because Angèle is now occupied with ours : yes, or go without it altogether ; you see what comes of disobeying. I sent you early on purpose to save Angèle. No, we don't want you here any longer ; and grandpapa does not want to say good-night to naughty boys, nor do I. Go ! " She pointed a dramatic finger at the door. The sermon was undoubtedly effective ; she was surprised how well it had worked out on the spur of the moment.

" Oh, I say, mamma," exclaimed Philip, " it wasn't his fault. You told him to say good-night to grandpapa, and he had to wait until he had done playing, that was all." Philip's tough conscience faintly reproached him, not to mention that he reflected with real awe that it would be intolerable to be scolded before his grandfather.

" Nonsense," said Henriette. " Besides, I am sure grandpapa stopped plenty of times, if he had wanted to obey."

" Only once," M. Lemaure remarked, seeing the culprit's tears run over.

" And then I held him," said Philip with an ingratiating smile. " He couldn't go, maman, you see, because I wouldn't let him."

" Don't be silly, dearest," said Henriette frowning. " I know I had something else to say, only now I have forgotten it with all of you. However, now that child has gone, so there is no more to be done."

Philip clapped to his book and threw it down.

" It's not *fair*," he said in English, facing her.

" Fai-er," mimicked his mother. " Suppose you run upstairs, my ' fair ' son, and wash yourself before the bell rings, and brush your hair, which resembles that of Struwelpeter ; and leave poor maman to concern herself with her own affairs. An idea, isn't it ? "

" I don't care," said Philip, " I won't come to dinner. I shan't eat anything. I shall take him up mine."

" Darling ! " Henriette received this defiance with enthusiasm, and embraced him with warm affection as he passed

her sulkily to the door. " You will do nothing of the sort, Phil, or you will break maman's heart. I never knew such rebels as I have got for sons," she added with plaintive complacency as he disappeared, advancing towards the fire, now almost the only light in the room. " Well, papa ? Don't sit there like a sphinx, but go and get ready for dinner. Remember, in *my* house one is punctual."

M. Lemaure rose obediently from where he still sat before the fire ; his expression in the firelight, however, was not entirely satisfactory to Henriette's critical eye.

" I suppose you will say I am not ' fair,' " she challenged him, intercepting his course towards the door.

" Fair ? You are adorable, my dear." He sought to escape.

" Bah, no. You know what I mean : *just*. What Jem is always raving about."

M. Lemaure paused. " Well, Henriette, if you consult me," he said, " I should advise you to leave justice to others —your husband, for instance. You would not shine in the part. The attitude with the balance is a stiff one, as you may have noticed in the pictures. It is not your style, as you and Madame Claude would say."

They looked at one another a minute.

" Après ? " said Henriette, with her chin up, in her old style exactly of receiving reproof. " Go along, papa ; I am disappointed in you. Oh, Jem, have you been out there all the time ? How you startled me, filling all the window like that." She bit her lip angrily. Her father had remarked how nervous she was.

" Sorry, my dear," said Jem, with a deprecating touch on her shoulder, as he passed through towards the stairs.

" Come and see the kid," said Jem, at the door of an upper room, just before the dinner-bell.

" And what of discipline ? " said M. Lemaure. " You are shameless."

" Not at all. I have just to look in and see that orders are carried out. Orders are a bit complicated at times," said Jem, " to the criminal." He had an easy-going smile that pleased M. Lemaure.

" There now, what did I say ? "

The complication had evidently for the moment overcome the criminal; for when they entered his room, Antoine was lying face downwards across his bed in the attitude of tragedy. His mother was angry with him, the shore-wind was moaning most unpleasantly in the chimney, and Philip's ugly story, as the dark grew on, was threatening to recur; and life altogether was black and difficult. His attitude expressed as much, and more.

His big father, however, proved consoling in the situation.

"Oh, come," James opined, "it's not as bad as all that, you know," and he swung him up in his arms. His view of life seemed to have power after some minutes to colour Bébé's; though the child hid his face on his shoulder, his attitude was less tense.

"Now look here," Jem proceeded presently. "Here's a visitor come to say good-night."

"Grandpapa," said Bébé, having lifted his head languidly to look. His pallor and plaintive little voice corresponded with the other items of tragedy.

"Look at him well," advised Jem. "Maybe you'll never have a visit again from such a great man."

Antoine stared down, frowning slightly, to where the visitor sat near his bed.

"He is not very great," he said. "You are more great, papa."

"I couldn't," Jem declared, standing tall as a lighthouse in the centre of the room, "if I stood right on tiptoe, touch him with the tip of my middle finger. Now then."

Antoine laughed suddenly, the tears still glittering on his eyelashes; and so did M. Lemaure.

"There's the bell," said Jem in warning. "You'll have to hurry up." He bent down, and Antoine flung himself on his grandfather with the fervour characteristic of all his proceedings. M. Lemaure held him close a minute: it was charming to him to be touched by a child again.

"I seem to be within thy reach, do I not?" he said. "Evidently thy father must be wrong about it."

Jem laughed.

"I only spoke for myself now, didn't I?" All his retorts, the Frenchman noticed, came in the same leisurely drawl. Then he unclasped the hands he had put behind him.

"Here now, I want one," he said, taking possession again. "And remember, you're an English kid." Antoine reduplicated his grandfather's embrace. "That's French," Jem reproved him. "Shall I take one of them to maman?"

The child at once became grave again, and his little nervous frown reappeared. He did not reply as his father tucked him into bed. The question was repeated, and he nodded, with his head turned away on the pillow.

"And say you're sorry?" said Jem, with a quiet air of business. Bébé gave a still smaller nod. The slight candle lit upon his life was flickering out. They were going away from him downstairs, to a dinner which smelt particularly good—and he had not had his supper. Neither of the men, comfortably certain of their food as grown-up people are, remembered the fact.

Providence, however, was kind to Bébé, interposing in the sturdy shape of the bonne Angèle. Just as Jem had a hand on the door there was a rapid knock, and Angèle with a tray swept in like a breeze.

"Monsieur thought I had forgotten him, I wager," she exclaimed as she entered. "Eh-h? Excusez, messieurs, je suis pressée." She bustled them out of the way, and proceeded to provide for Bébé's needs.

"Maman said you had too much to do," said Antoine, doubtfully looking on at her preparations.

"Psst!" said Angèle. "One can do two things at the same moment and not die of it, I imagine. Otherwise, why did the bon Dieu give one two hands?"

Bébé laughed at this idea, and M. Lemaure at the door turned round. He recognised the clipped accept of his native Paris.

"It occurs to me he provided you with a heart at the same time," he suggested. Angèle swung upon him.

"He had better have given me a third hand, Monsieur; that is more use in a ménage. A heart is a superfluity when it comes to daily bread."

"What do you think about the bread, Bébé?" said his grandfather, with a gesture to the bowl of bread and milk on the tray. "I should say a heart went for something there."

Bébé held up his arms to Angèle, whose tempestuous presence did not appear to disquiet him at all.

"Dear little one," said she, in the same sharp tone, and kissed him with vigour. "Eat then, quickly, for I shall need the tray."

"There is a heart wanting somewhere when such as that are sent starving about a bagatelle," she added in an audible mutter, as she flounced past her master and vanished in a whirlwind as she had come.

Bébé called his father back a minute.

"What was it?" M. Lemaure inquired on the stairs.

"Question of conscience," said Jem. "He wasn't sure if he was justified in eating after what his mother had said."

"What did you tell him?"

"Oh, I officially revoked it—whatever it was. I shall explain to Henriette," he added.

M. Lemaure smiled. "I fear it is you your children have to thank for any conscience they may possess," he said. "I advance no claim at all on our side."

"This one's all right," said Jem gravely. "I could have dropped a little more on the other with advantage."

"Phil's a trouble, eh?"

"Well, he's a bit wearing. He's not *even* sincere," James said suddenly, in a gust of confidence.

"Even? Is it not the hardest thing for us all to learn?"

Jem looked round at him. "First thing I learnt," he said shortly. "I had to."

"So in your turn you teach—by force."

"You don't believe in that," said Edgell with another swift look.

"Not in the least," said M. Lemaure.

"Not if it succeeds, eh?"

"Then I believe the employer of the force has triumphed over it. Am I to congratulate you?"

Jem laughed. "You're clever," he said. "If I had more time, I don't say I shouldn't try some fancy ways. But there's no time in the world," he said, in another gust like the first, "for all these modern fancy-mongers expect of you. And Phil don't hate me," he added quietly, as they entered the dining-room.

III

NEXT day dawned cold but cloudless; the last of summer in the sky, and the first of winter in the air. Before he descended in the morning M. Lemaure heard Philip below his window, at issue with his parents. James was starting early with his bicycle to work as usual, and was giving an opinion before he left.

"Out of the question in a wind like this. You'll only have him ill again. If you can't get a closed carriage he must stop at home."

"Bébé's going," said Philip.

"Bébé does not catch cold so easily, dearest," said Henriette. "Think if you were ill again, what an annoyance for us."

"If Bébé goes," said Philip, "I shall. That's all."

"You'll do what you're told," observed his father, and there was a pause.

"Well," said Henriette, cheerfully, taken with a bright idea. "I had better leave them both, hadn't I, and then they can amuse themselves together. Angèle will look after them, and they will be off my hands."

Her father smiled unseen above.

"That's a solution," said Jem's grave voice. "But wasn't there a promise, eh?"

"I never make promises," said Henriette. "They are such stifling things."

"Well, but I mean, he expects to go."

"Bébé? Oh yes, he expects to. We have talked about nothing else," said Henriette, "since grandpapa's letter came."

"So do I expect to go," her elder son remarked.

"We don't all get what we expect," said Jem. His manner to Philip was in almost comical contrast with hers.

"If you had let me have a bicycle," said Philip, "there wouldn't have been any fuss."

"Perhaps you'd like mine," said Jem.

"Don't you want it?" cried Henriette, who never learnt to recognise satire.

"Yes," said James, "and I've got to start. Henriette, see here: I leave it to your father."

"Why not to me?" said Henriette. "Oh, bah, go along."

James presumably went, the bicycle being inaudible in the sandy road.

Philip, after a pause sufficient to let his father get well away, said, "I'm going."

"Darling," said Henriette, "you must mind papa. And you wouldn't care for it."

"Why not?" said the boy sharply.

"Because you are such a dull goose in music," said his mother, with her beautiful frankness. "And a good concert is wasted on you. That's why, my angel."

"Take your hand away," said Philip, his voice choking: at which moment his grandfather came on the scene from above rather hastily. The boy was facing his mother in the hall, obviously on fire with anger.

"Look at him," laughed Henriette, turning with very much the air of an exhibitor of a fine young forest animal. "He's quite cross."

"He cannot," said M. Lemaure, "be as cross as I am." He passed by her and put a hand on Philip's shoulder. "Excuse me, my dear," he said firmly. "I cannot at present speak to your mother. Show me the way to breakfast."

Philip turned stiffly to show him. The way was simple, for the table was laid out of doors, where Bébé, looking slightly pale and tragical, was waiting with the black dog. M. Lemaure saw the elder boy winking the tears back angrily, for Philip was British enough to be ashamed to cry. His grandfather gave him time, his first instinct with a child who was really hurt. He quite believed Henriette had not the least intended to hurt him. Goading—pricking, rather—with her had become a habit, one might almost have said an instinct, at thoughtless moments. It had not occurred to him that she would try it on her own children—and yet it was so like Henriette to do so.

Meantime M. Lemaure demanded food severely, without looking at his daughter.

"Papa, you are ridiculous," said Henriette, seating herself

radiantly beautiful at the head of the table. "This is just the way," she informed her family, "he always went on. I shan't give him any sugar at all till he tells me what it is."

There was a silence, while M. Lemaure, who liked sugar, looked melancholy. He was a born actor, and though the children suspected it was a joke they could not help feeling sorry for him when they saw his face. Antoine, who had reserved a piece in his saucer for the black dog, shyly passed it to him.

"Bébé!" said Henriette sharply, and slapped the other hand that lay by her on the table. On the instant M. Lemaure gathered up the hand so treated and drew the small boy to him.

"That settles it," he said quietly. "You come, and Phil, and she shall be left at home. The idea of giving way to temper like that, so early in the day. Does she often do it?"

Philip stared at him across the table, his colour rising. Could he really mean it?

"I heard, you see," his grandfather explained to him, "out of my window before I came down. She little knew how much I heard." He looked at his daughter for the first time. "Do you think I could play without both my grandsons in the audience, when I have come all the way from Paris on purpose to have them? Any one could see it is nonsensical but her. How far is it, Phil?"

"To St. Aviel? Five miles."

"Nearly six," said Henriette quickly.

"Why, but one could walk then."

"Phil cannot walk alone," his mother cried.

"It's only one road all the way," Philip grunted. "I suppose I can follow my nose."

"I don't like to think of it, darling," said Henriette, looking at him piteously. As if the first gipsy who came along the road could possibly resist the temptation to steal him! "I should be miserable all the time."

"All right," said the boy wearily. "I won't go at all."

"If I could trust you, Antoine," said his grandfather, "to bring the violin ——" Bébé looked up inquiring; his mother rapped the table.

"Papa, what are you talking about? Did you hear me say it was six miles?"

"If we got lost, you could explain," said her father, and both the boys broke into laughter. Really a grandfather like this was a discovery. "However," M. Lemaure proceeded, "my nose is as straight as Philip's—very nearly. I have little doubt we shall arrive by two o'clock."

"Six miles!" his daughter cried again.

"And six hours before us," he said, glancing at the clock. "I am rather old, I know, but still ——"

"Papa darling, you must not." Henriette stood up. The boy beside her had been furtively watching her face.

"I'll stop," he said with an effort, and rose too. "It's all right, maman."

Henriette snatched him before he could retreat. "I am afraid, darling," she said, "it is no use when grandpapa looks like that. I knew him, you see, before you did. Only take care of him, Phil, for my sake and every one's, won't you."

And so it was settled.

That autumn morning's walk was the beginning for Philip of a hero-worship that no change of circumstances, lapse of years, intrusion of other interests or enthusiasms, ever succeeded in shaking in the smallest degree. His was a faithful nature, once the barriers in him of shyness, obstinacy, and youthful cynicism had been broken down; behind he had much of his mother's warmth and sensibility ready enough to aid the operation of breaking down when the call came: but he never threw his heart open to any mortal with the absolute self-abandonment with which he opened it to his grandfather during this morning's walk over the cliffs.

M. Lemaure's first proceedings that day had awakened a certain expectation, and his grandfather had the feeling as they walked that he was being watched. The extremely self-conscious type of the child was a little strange to him, so that he was even extra careful in what he said and did. But he could not alter his native simplicity, and it was that that was bound to win the day. The boy, rather precocious, full of life and thronging ideas, though he really loved both his parents, was actually fevered by the variance of their treatment of him. He had much of each within him, and neither really understood

him. Space and rest was what his hot young nature needed above all, and M. Lemaure's society offered both. Philip's restless ego struggled for a time, but he felt the calming spaces very soon, much as outwardly he felt the sunny air and wide horizon on the cliffs above the sea, and long before the end of the walk they had taken possession of his spirit entirely.

He began by boasting freely, and M. Lemaure let him have his fill of it without interruption; indeed he found himself very well amused by the boy's disclosures. He noticed that Philip boasted, among other things, of his father's rigorous treatment of him, yet another clear sign to his grandfather's mind that Jem's methods missed their mark. However, it was evident at least that he bore no real resentment, for he talked of his father's "scores" in the combat as freely as he talked of his own. In passing, his grandfather marked in him Jem's form of humour exactly, and he gathered that in the intervals of daily strife, the two were friends.

All the way while he chattered, the boy's bright eyes were darting about him; and he stopped several times to watch birds from the cliff. M. Lemaure, playing town-bred ignorance, tempted him to talk of them, and Philip very soon forgot to boast in a genuine enthusiasm. He gave his grandfather a vast deal of quite interesting information, his opinion of his ignorant companion rising naturally all the while. He had nearly all the conversation to himself indeed, until they sat down to rest on the highest point of the promontory above the bay of St. Aviel, where a seat was the outpost of one of the promenades from that town, which was in sight below them, in all its civilised ugliness of stuccoed villas and glittering beflagged hotels. M. Lemaure carefully turned his back upon it, as he took up his position on the seat; while Philip flung himself down upon the grass near by, and varied his conversation by practising long shots with the pebbles that lay around him.

"Do you know, Philip, you are a very interesting companion," M. Lemaure remarked presently. "I mean, you talk very well. Did any one ever tell you that?"

"No," said Philip, blushing crimson at the unexpected compliment. "They generally tell me I talk too much," he added bluntly after a minute.

Looking at his grandfather it vaguely came over him that he might have been wasting his opportunities a little. He might never again get the chance of a five-mile walk tête-à-tête with a celebrity. Philip began to think about him a little for a change, and so arrived at curiosity.

"I suppose," he said suddenly, "you are not nervous when you play at a concert now, are you, grandpapa?"

M. Lemaure looked round in surprise: his thoughts had been far away.

"No," he said, smiling. "I don't think I am, to tell the truth."

"Used to be," inquired Philip, "when you began?"

"It is rather long ago." He considered. "I can never remember being rendered incapable by nerves, if that is what you mean."

"Yes. That's like Bébé. It never seems to matter if he's by himself, or a dozen people listening. It's odd: specially when you think what a little thing upsets him most times."

There was a pause: M. Lemaure seemed inclined to return to his own reflections.

"Was mamma?" asked Philip suddenly.

"Henriette? Nervous? Yes, I suppose one should say she was. She only played once before the public, you know. Yes, she was certainly in a terrible state of nerves beforehand, poor child," said M. Lemaure, as he sought out his memories. "I remember now, she suffered so much, that I was inclined to refuse to let her accept another engagement."

"But I suppose she played well, didn't she?"

"Quite well, once she had begun."

"Isn't it funny?" said Philip. "I'm like that too. I suppose I get it from her."

"Yes, you are very like her," said his grandfather absently.

"Do you think so?" said the boy, with such a vivid flush of pleasure that M. Lemaure felt he could forgive him anything. Soon he was off again:

"What is it makes people nervous, grandpapa?" He waited for him to say vanity.

"Anxiety to please," said M. Lemaure, without hesitation.

"But isn't everybody that? Aren't you? Won't you be anxiousto please this afternoon?"

"Let me think." M. Lemaure gave his mind to it. "I shall be glad if I please the public of St. Aviel: I shall be very glad if I please the prince: I shall be extremely glad if I please you, and your mother, and Antoine. But, I believe, Phil, I am only *anxious* to please—myself."

"That sounds jolly selfish," said his grandson, doubtfully.

"Yes it does," agreed M. Lemaure. Philip considered.

"Then, it doesn't make you nervous when you are only anxious to please yourself," he summed it up.

"It seems not." Another minute passed.

"I think I see what you mean," said Philip, tossing over another stone. "You mean you care more about it than any one else there, even maman and people like her. And so—if you please yourself—you know they ought to be pleased too."

A pebble flung into space filled each pause in the sentence. At the end he turned and regarded his grandfather with calm triumph.

"Do you think so?" said M. Lemaure, obviously struck.

"Yes," said Philip with decision. "You care for it awfully; so awfully that you don't mind about anything else at all. Don't you now, sir?"

"Perhaps. I suppose that we all have something that we care about in that way."

Philip turned his attention again to the stones. He tried hard to think of something for which he cared "in that way" while he dug them out of the grass and despatched them thoughtfully upon their several careers. It may have been that the warring interest of the occupation distracted his mind but he could think of nothing at all.

After a time, he got up, and came across to his grandfather's side on the seat.

"Are you tired, sir?" he asked, unaware that he spoke in English.

The old man turned quickly.

"No, my dear. Do you wish to go on? Are you cold?"

"No, I'm too hot. I didn't mean that. Only I thought, if you weren't tired, perhaps you'd tell me something."

"Tell?" His grandfather smiled at the young request. "What would you like to be told, then?"

"Anything—I don't care. About yourself. Maman says you have done such a lot."

Henriette's father shrugged. "I have *been* myself," he said. "Surely that is enough." Then as though regretting the restlessness, he put a hand on the boy. "See, little Phil," he said. "Have you heard what I play to-day?"

"Not much," said Philip. "It's by Beethoven, isn't it?"

"Yes. There is one to talk of, if you should talk."

"We've got a picture at home," said Philip. "He looks a grumpy old fellow."

"Grumpy!" The Frenchman laughed at the word; but the laugh fell off his face.

"Tell me about him," said Philip, who was heedful of the look.

So M. Lemaure told the well-known tale, very carefully and simply; for his English was not too abundant, and he had to watch his words; but the boy listening was thrilled by it none the less, for no poverty of language could disguise the narrator's instinct for dramatic presentation; and towards the climax of his hero's triumph and of his tragedy his short sentences were each a telling stroke. Also, he was moved greatly himself by what he told, and no child is impervious to real emotion—especially in an idol such as M. Lemaure was fast becoming in his grandson's eyes. Philip took a long breath when it was over.

"It's awful," he said almost resentfully. "I say, you know, was it worth it? Was it *really*, grandpapa? I mean, I suppose it is for us, of course: but was it for him?"

"No, poor soul, not then. Nothing in life is worth much suffering. Those great ones do not win their crown, unless that suffering is a crown. They are themselves the crown, to us. Their immortality is ours. When the time comes for them to wear it, they have already passed to other things!" His smile was touched with disdain as he said it: then he checked himself and rose.

"Come, my dear," he said. "It is getting late."

Philip the talker kept silence all the way down the steep path to the town. Not a sorrowful silence, however, for the dead Beethoven had already passed, or been ousted, from his

mind. What are dead heroes, at eleven years old, when you can get within twenty miles of a living one? A new and almost painful happiness swelled within him; and he looked with sublime pity on every casual wanderer who passed; because they had not a grandfather like his—and did not even know a hero when they saw one in the road.

M. Lemaure was personally invited to take lunch with his friend the prince, Henriette having made an appointment with a married friend of hers also staying in the hotel, that there should be no chance of burdening her father's royal acquaintance with a crowd of his relatives, as she put it. She had no ground of complaint, for she had her invitation in form to the public reception after the concert, where she would meet all the artists, many of whom were known to her already.

When her father had discovered from one of the officials in waiting that she had not yet arrived, he suggested to Philip that they should go and wait on the terrace, and hear the band and look at the bay. Philip, whom the conspicuous reverence of the hotel staff towards his grandfather had greatly impressed, welcomed any proposal that offered a further opportunity of showing him off to the world. Consequently, he was not a little disgusted when, on their way through the hotel quadrangle, M. Lemaure was laid hold of by an old gentleman, who was reading a newspaper behind a palm in a retired corner by the fountain. He was stout, florid and voluble, the picture of a bore, to Philip's critical eye. To add to his discontent, they conversed in German, so that he could not follow what they said. So he watched the gold-fish in stately silence, inwardly surprised that his grandfather, up till then so attentive, should neither think of introducing him to the fat man, nor of cutting short the conversation. It was not till the stranger looked towards him, and spoke a few words aside, and M. Lemaure turned and said quietly, "Philip, M. le prince wishes to know you," that he realised his mistake.

The shock was such that he coloured to his hair, as he advanced to shake hands with royalty for the first and last time in his life. The stout prince growled a remark in German to his friend which had somehow the air of a compliment, and then turned and spoke to him very pleasantly in French. Philip's

sensible answers and shy bearing seemed to please the gruff old German, who finally patted him on the head and with an amiable "A bientôt" to M. Lemaure, returned to his newspaper.

They spent the interval on the terrace, observing the brilliant crowd of all nations that was shifting there, until Henriette appeared, with Bébé in one hand and the violin in other, followed by a submissive hotel servant, to whose painful anxiety to relieve her of her burden she paid not the smallest attention, though it was plainly weighing on his mind. She handed over her charge into her father's hands: and thereafter he disappeared temporarily from the world of private life, having received from her the family formula of good wishes, delivered with a most impudent smile; for Henriette was the only member of the family Lemaure who treated its head, artistically, with frivolity.

Henriette made herself very conspicuous, and gave the officials a great deal of trouble, in the concert hall, before she could make up her mind as to the seat she preferred. She had never much objection either to giving trouble or awakening attention, but she was in some real perplexity. Her father's last word to her had been a warning about Bébé. "His first orchestra," said M. Lemaure: and Henriette was realising with indignation, even at this early stage, that she was already being hampered by her children. Personally, she desired to see as well as hear; to see her father's mechanism on the one hand; on the other to see—and be seen—in the hall. This was not compatible with hiding with Bébé behind a pillar, that she might soothe him if his excitement proved past bearing.

Consequently Madame Edgell debated and pouted with two gold-laced officials hanging anxiously on her words, every male eye in the neighbourhood upon her person, and every female eye upon her Paris hat.

"Which actress is it?" ran the invisible question around her in the crowded salle; for though not naturally majestic, there was an air about her of repressed vitality and power which, even without the hat and the handsome child beside her, would have made her noticeable.

At last she compromised upon a good central place some way back, to which her friends at the hotel invited her,

sufficiently in the shadow to protect her without entirely obliterating her charms. And the principal gold-laced official, vastly relieved to get rid of her, handed her her programmes, scores and opera-glass, and was dismissed with an exquisite smile. She immediately planted her paraphernalia on Bébé's seat, and took him up, that she might point out to him the different instruments as they arrived, and explain the business of each. Then she took up the score of the concerto, shooting as she did so, the pile of programmes on to the floor, and showed him the various entrances he was to expect. He knew already the virtuoso part, having heard her constantly practise it at home, but the full score was new to him, and he studied it curiously, making now and then a little plaintive remark, that was so funny in the contrast of its absurd wisdom with its babyish tone, that the English lady in front of Henriette looked round several times with amused curiosity at the pair.

Presently there was a stir through the room, and the prince and his party of noble ladies—whose appearance caused Henriette and her intimate friend much amusement and satisfaction—swept through to their places in front; and almost immediately after, the tuning which had brought his little disquieted frown to Antoine's forehead, died away at the conductor's tap; and then a rattle of applause broke out, swelled and surged through the building, and Henriette, turning from the distractions of private criticism, saw her father before her.

Careless as she always was, she had not prepared herself for it, though she might have known, for his fame had risen steadily during his late retirement; and it was no exaggeration to say that he was even better and more widely known now than he had been when he gave his farewell concert in Paris some five years before. Henriette clasped Bébé until she almost hurt him in her irrepressible rush of emotion, as the applause about them, instead of dying, rose and spread insistently, and fell like hail from every part of the hall upon his head; and she forgot her rancour against the English when she saw the prim faces round her quicken into eagerness and enthusiasm at the sight of him; and her mockery of the Germans when she beheld the prince rise from his seat and

openly lead the ovation, and his conductor turn in his perch and beam down on the artist's aged head a hero-worship as glad and generous as that of his young grandson in the morning.

As for Philip himself, he had never experienced such a war of sensations in his life as that which struggled in him during this shower of universal acclamation. Of course he had heard that his grandfather was a popular artist, but he had never dreamt that it meant this. It caught him by the throat: he sat helpless, gazing with brilliant eyes and flushed cheeks at the calm figure that was the centre of so much excitement. He had "hoped to please the public!" That was all he had said, and "the public" fell on him in return to this extent before he had even begun. Philip thought he ought to be satisfied.

He appeared to be. He gave easy acknowledgment to every part of the hall, and a low bow and smile in the prince's direction, and then that worthy took his seat and wiped his brow, and the four heart-beats which open the great first movement struck the hall instantly into silence.

Long before the solo instrument entered, before the heavenly strain of the second theme had drawn to a close—Henriette had to lay down the critic and the daughter together, and come to the aid of her son. Bébé was trembling in every limb as he leant against her, and all the best and tenderest part of Henriette, already thrown open to the call of great music, came forth at the sight of his need. This she understood at least, her quiet actions said, as she drew him jealously close to her, holding him firmly with one hand, while the other clasped the little ones he had unconsciously gripped together in the overpowering anguish of bliss that possessed him.

"It's all right, darling," she whispered softly. "Wait: listen for grandpapa. It will be easier when he comes."

The single voice of the principal violin leapt into the light as the rush of the orchestra abated, and Antoine found it "easier," as his mother had said. From that instant through the movement Henriette's keen eyes were fastened to the performer, though her hands still guarded Bébé.

"Well," the daughter reflected, "if they bully him after this, it will do no more than serve him right." To talk of age and retirement, indeed, while he could still play like that! Of all people in the world, none but papa could have had the

severity to drop the bushel upon such a light as his own, and trim the little lamps, as she knew he sedulously did, of his inferiors. Henriette turned over in mind a variety of the newer players she had heard, and laughed with gay contempt internally. Incorrigible critic as she was, while outwardly her eye marked slight shades and uncertainties, within she clasped him to her. There was no one like him : he was hers. Lucien and the others boasted of him, but she possessed. From a child she had been aware of her feminine prerogative in the matter. She had teased and tormented him, mocked his high standard, flouted his authority in teaching and training ; but he was papa and her especial property, as he very well knew besides.

" Le petit garçon—n'est pas malade ? " said the kind-faced English lady in front of her in laborious French, as she turned half round in her seat during the interval.

" I thank you, no, madame. It is only the music that troubles him a little," she answered sweetly.

" Troubles ? He does not like it, you mean ? "

" He likes it too much, madame. Look up, darling, and speak to this lady."

Bébé moved his head and looked round. His dark eyes were wide and wet in his little colourless face.

" Poor little dear," said the lady in her own tongue to herself. " He looks so delicate."

" I am very well, thank you," said Bébé, meeting her sympathetic eyes.

" Why, he speaks English," she said with surprise, glancing quickly at the mother again. " Are you fond of music, my dear ? "

Bébé shook his head dreamily : it was better not to attempt, in the English at his command, an answer to that. " It hurts," he explained, " and why does not that play some more ? "

He glanced restlessly at the beautiful, dreadful, many-handed orchestra, wailing faintly above him like a lost spirit. " Isn't he funny and sweet ? " said the lady to her companion ; and proceeded to compare him to some Bobby or Reggie at home, whose image he had called up. Henriette, settling back comfortably for the second part of the concerto, glanced at her ill-fitting silken back with approval.

The highest dream of Antoine's early life was already over, and he lay quiet and thoughtful against his mother's soft furs during the remaining part of the music. Henriette could free her mind of him, and give a little attention to Philip, whom for a considerable period she had quite forgotten. When she looked at him his chin was resting on his arms folded on the back of the chair in front of him, and he was watching with mild amusement and curiosity his grandfather's wonderful solo performance in the cadenza : then he suddenly laughed and sat up, as the music broke into the irresistible rhythm of the finale, and as though in reflection of that unconscious laugh, came the customary movement of surprised relief among the spectators.

The orchestra took it too fast, but the soloist, with a comical lift of the eyebrows, that Henriette recognised, let them go. He had been fighting the sensation throughout that the whole performance was a game—a make-believe played in the dreams in which he had been lost so long ; and beyond that he was tired, much more tired than he had expected or imagined ; and beyond that again, he was a Frenchman born, and loved to amuse, even though it should be illicitly. It was an amazing performance mechanically regarded, but it was the transformation worked in the artist himself that Henriette and Philip were watching.

" Voilà papa," she cried, laughing in ecstasy like a girl, when, at the end of all, he stood smiling in front of them on the platform, held, rather than recalled, by the storm of applause.

" See, Bébé, he looks this way." And she stood her little son on the seat beside her, and holding him firmly, for he was still shivering slightly with excitement, bade him kiss his hand. Bébé did so, and M. Lemaure, who could not see the gesture, but saw at once the little black head he sought above the flowery bonnets of the English ladies, bowed low in those ladies' direction with an exaggerated deference that impressed them much.

Only the one in front of Henriette, who had caught her remark, looked swiftly from the musician on the platform to the child on the chair behind, and clutched her companion's arm.

" My dear," said she, " it's the family. Then that accounts."

IV

"KEEP an eye on my things, my dear," said madame, leaning across Philip to her friend. "I simply must just run round and look after him. I know he will be dead. There is ten minutes interval and Bébé has never seen an artist's room, have you love? I want to introduce you."

"Lemaure—Lemaure: I am Henriette Lemaure. I must see him," she said impatiently to the officials, who were inclined to bar her way without. Her magnificent ease had its effect, and she passed unhindered with Antoine through the successive doors until they found themselves at the entrance of the room that had been set apart for the performers, and entered upon a babel of chatter and smoke.

She looked about her sharply, catching sight as she did so of half a dozen acquaintances: for the second part of the day's programme was light and varied, and there were numerous performers engaged in it.

"Henriette! My dear child, this is really thoughtless." Her father's tone was almost sharp. Following his eyes in astonishment and pique, she looked down at the child at her side.

"Bébé—stupid!" she ejaculated.

Bébé, his already shaken nerves completely overset by the hubbub, was clinging to her skirt and fighting with convulsive sobs: the deep almost dry-eyed sobbing of sheer excitement.

Stooping, M. Lemaure picked him up in his arms. He was tired himself, and his own nerves not very steady. He could scarcely stand any more at the moment.

"Papa, I did so want to see everybody, and I couldn't leave him," Henriette defended herself quickly.

"Could you not have waited till the end? I warned you, my dear. You might have taken him into the air and quiet for a little instead of—this." He looked about him with weariness.

"Henriette! Chérie, it cannot be! Whence dost thou spring?"

A large lady in pink almost screamed. She was Mlle. Schindler, the detested rival of Henriette's student days.

"Dearest Sazanne, I am ravished," she replied, and they embraced with enthusiasm. In a moment the mother was shut in by a laughing and exclaiming circle of her old friends, and her father, with her child in his arms, was left almost alone. After a second's debate he carried him over to a quiet corner near an open window, and sat down to wait patiently until the painful paroxysm that was shaking him from head to foot had slightly calmed.

He sat silent, thankful for the peace: only his left hand smoothed unconsciously the child's ruffled hair behind his ear. No one was near them except a tall young man, who was standing rather apart from the rest of the company by the fireplace. He felt as solitary as he looked, and wretchedly nervous into the bargain; for he was an amateur singer engaged by the management in view of the large and useful English colony at St. Aviel. M. Lemaure had been introduced to him, for he had insisted on being made known personally to all his colleagues for the day. He was looking at the pair near him now with curiosity, and M. Lemaure, presently turning his head, met a pair of Irish grey eyes fixed on him inquiringly.

"Over-excited," he quietly answered the unspoken question. The young man approached.

"Poor little chap. Surely—not your child, sir?"

"Scarcely," M. Lemaure laughed. "My youngest child's youngest child, Mr. O'Halloran."

"Oh, excuse me. Your playing rather throws one out of reckoning."

"Flattery, eh? I have heard your division of the nation is not above that."

"Meanin' the British?" His running smile instantly proclaimed his birth.

"I beg your pardon," M. Lemaure said seriously. "Your politics are so confusing in England. Ah, come—that is right."

The young man had an attractive accent and a pleasant voice. Bébé, always awake to these things, lifted his head.

"I have heard, Bébé," said his grandfather, "that monsieur can sing a song about a little fox. Ask him if he will give it to us this afternoon."

"Will you sing about the fox?" said Bébé faintly, after a space of mutual observation between the two. The young man's eyes were very merry and kind.

"I wish to goodness I could," said he with a sigh. "I am booked to be sober for the day, worse luck."

"Well, then, we must give him a 'bis.' There is our only chance for that fox, Bébé."

O'Halloran laughed, with a boyish shrug. The nervousness which he had temporarily forgotten reappeared.

"If I have one, I'll sing it," he said. "That's not a bargain that will cost me much."

"Monsieur is too modest." M. Lemaure changed into French as his daughter approached. He left Antoine to his new friend for a moment. "Henriette my dear: one instant."

Madame shook off her pressing throng of admirers and approached him at the summons.

"Be quiet, my love," said she to the last. "I have some wretched children about. I will see you afterwards upstairs. Well, papa?" She bent over him with an air of possession.

"I wondered," he said quietly, "what it was your intention to do with these at the end."

"Send them home, of course," madame said, straightening her hat at a convenient glass. "Phil is quite sensible, and I ordered a closed carriage. Loulou has promised me to wrap him up before they start. That dearest love has no invitation, so she has the time to give. I trust her like myself." Henriette's friends, when they were useful, had a way of becoming even excessively dear to her.

"Cannot you keep this one with you till you go?"

"Bébé? O no, really, I can't be bothered with him. I have promised quantities of people to talk, and he would only get sleepy and cry. And I cannot talk my best, can I, when I am distracted by howling children. It is far better for him to get home quietly to bed. Trust me, dearest goose."

She patronised him lovingly; for the moment it was delightful to play with him, and keep him from others who were watching their chance behind.

"Bébé's quite used to doing without me," she said, giving frankly more attention to young O'Halloran than the child he was playing with. "Besides he cheers up so quickly, you do

not know him. There never was such a changeable monkey on this earth. Hear him laughing now ! "

" May he not change again ? "

" Funny little papa," said Henriette, coaxing him with a delicate finger on his cheek. " You are tired, aren't you darling ? Just for this once, may one not take charge of you instead ? "

He shook his head at her : but he smiled. When she grew soft, Henriette was still irresistible.

" You know you go to-morrow—and I have hardly seen you," she murmured, with a sudden sly kiss to complete the conquest. Then, at the sound of a distant bell, she became stately with miraculous suddenness.

" Pardon, monsieur," said she with sweetness to the young Irishman. " You are too amiable, but we must transport ourselves, my son and I. Antoine, come quickly with maman, darling." And capturing Bébé's hand, she swept off with him in her train.

During the second part of the concert, madame gave her critical faculties, till then somewhat submerged by family feeling, full play. She changed places with Philip, that she might confide to her friend her valuable views on art and persons. She pointed out how sadly her sweetest Suzanne's voice had gone off—hardly surprising, indeed, when one reflected that she had always been too vain as a girl to study properly : and that such judgments are bound to fall on artists who trust to a limited natural gift, and an appearance which a certain section of the public find pleasing.

" Ce petit Halloran," Henriette granted, was a " joli garçon," and had an agreeable voice ; but like most of the English, he had not the beginning of a notion of the way to sing. However, here the room disagreed with her, consisting as it did to a large extent of the despised nation : and Bébé's friend got the " bis " without any need of his help.

Both madame's sons went promptly over to the enemy at the second song, and even she unbent.

" C'est chic, ça," she said surprised, as Bébé climbed again on to his seat, that he might signify in person his approval of the little Irish fox, whose adventures were declaimed with such entertaining rapidity ; and for the second time that day got a bow and smile all to himself.

The temporary merriment woke him up, but the effects did not last long. He lay languidly across his chair, with his head resting on the back, listening to Philip's voluble and confidential witticisms on the performers; but his eyes wandered restlessly in between; and he looked so white before the close, that Henriette's attention was disagreeably distracted, and her remarks to Loulou became inexplicably coloured with ill-humour. Her friend, who knew her well, thought she was tired; so very possibly Henriette was, had she allowed herself for a moment to admit it, but even that explanation hardly reached the full truth. It was rather divided purpose than a conscience that was troubling her; for like most persons with strong wills and clear brains, having set her mind on a course, she detested to be in any degree distracted from it. Now the distraction would not leave her, and it made her increasingly pettish and impatient.

She put Antoine briskly into his coat at the end, addressing him with bracing cheerfulness; dilating eloquently on how much he had enjoyed himself, how he would go and have cakes with Madame Loulou, and be a very good boy, and ride home all alone with Phil in the carriage. It sounded a delightful programme as worded by Henriette, and she was convinced it was all he could ask; especially as she kissed him warmly and told him with conviction that he was an angel, before she put him into the arms of Loulou's husband. All the way through the packed throng to the rendezvous she had made with her father, Henriette chattered with surprising volubility to her friend, who did scarcely anything on her side but beseech her to lower her voice, for her observations were recklessly personal.

Her father and the prince were waiting together at the appointed spot in the covered quadrangle, and the expected introduction was then and there accomplished, in a fashion that was all the more flattering for its informality. His Serenity succumbed so promptly that Henriette was almost inclined to resent it; and so did a magnificent solemn young officer in uniform whom he presented as his eldest son. Henriette was brilliant indeed, to a point to surprise her father, and looked yet more lovely than her custom with the excitement,

necessarily contained, to illuminate her. The younger prince stared openly at this vision falling upon his somewhat dreary way, for the dull society of a small court could supply nothing to approach it. He threshed his ponderous brain for responses that should not fall just too late to fit into the interstices of Madame Edgell's rapid sallies; but she was so distracting to watch that he hardly ever captured them in time, and was driven to laugh boisterously instead, and feverishly twisted his fine moustache.

Henriette's friends had conveyed Bébé to the edge of the fountain, to show him the gold fish and the flowers; but they had not been long there before his grandfather came to fetch him, for the prince would not hear of not being presented in form to both the grandchildren of his old friend, not to mention the children of his exquisite daughter.

While both the good-natured royalties played with and petted the child, M. Lemaure, who held him, watched him closely. The little nervous frown constantly twitched his brow, even while he smiled sedately at the jests of his German admirers. His hands gripped the collar of his grandfather's coat, as though he were not absolutely certain of himself or his surroundings.

The prince at last demanded a kiss.

"I wager," said he, "that you do not know how kings should be kissed."

"One kisses their hand," said Bébé, with a slight quick sigh. He did not much want to talk, as it happened, just now. But maman was there, and people must be answered.

"No, no," said the prince laughing. "That is only in the Märchen. Do you not know, submission is out of date nowadays? Besides, you are a Frenchman, little one. A son of the Republic, eh?"

"Yes," said Antoine doubtfully. "Except with papa."

"Aha, I forgot. Still, you were born in France, in the land of equality. Frenchmen kiss no hands."

"Except of women," pronounced his son, with a glance in Henriette's direction. He had such an air of capturing at last the right thing to say, that she caught her lip with her teeth, in terror of laughing aloud.

"True," said his father solemnly. "Of women, not of kings.

One thinks nothing at all of kings in France, is it not so, my friend ? "

" Sometimes," said Bébé, looking through him after his habit, " they are of a certain utility."

Both the royalties roared with laughter. Bébé winced, and wished they would not make such a noise.

" Maman said it," he explained gently when they would let him.

" What is that," cried his mother with a magnificent frown.

" Madame, but we are too flattered, are we not Heinrich ? " cried the prince, still shaking. " Pray little one, tell us in what we are useful. It is news to us, I assure you."

" It is that you make a concert," said Antoine.

" Aha ! And bring a grandfather, hey ? "

" Yes." The child lifted a single imploring look to the face above him. Then he suddenly buried his head in his shoulder.

" Your Serenity will excuse him," said M. Lemaure. "He is tired."

" But it is a wit ! " cried the prince. " Come, my child, let me have my kiss, and then you shall go. Look now, I will show you how one does it." With which, he took possession of one small hand, and bent his bald head down to it.

" Now do you see ? " he said. " It is I that submit. And do you know why ? "

Bébé shook his head without raising it.

" I have a favour to ask you ! yes—such helpless things are princes. I need your assistance in a plot. It is my wish and that of the princess, my wife, to carry off madame your mother for the evening, I dare not ask her to leave her charming children for such as we. Will you ask her for me ? There is my request."

There was a minute's absolute silence. Bébé had lifted his head and turned his eyes on his mother.

" I believe she can scarcely refuse such kindness, sir," her father said, his keen glance also upon her.

What was the matter with her, Henriette wondered angrily, that she could not speak ? Here was the very thing that she wanted, the invitation to stay with her father, to shine at his

side with his reflected lustre and her own ; it could not have been offered in a more courteous and delicate fashion ; a dozen obvious forms of gay and graceful response to it flashed across her brain ; but her tongue they would not pass.

" Support me, little one," the prince urged gently. " There is need."

Henriette, still without speaking, swept slowly across the intervening space, and came up to her father.

" Do you ask me, Bébé ? " she said. Her voice was not quite steady as she looked at him frowning.

" Oui, maman," said Antoine faintly.

" Tell me to go then."

He could not in word. His hand alone made a faint gesture towards the prince.

Who shall say what took Henriette then, faced with what commonly she would have called such an easy choice ? Gaiety, indulgence, flattery, all she loved best on the one hand : on the other this child, always so easily treated, who did not even ask for her.

It may have been simply dramatic instinct—that exigent sense of the needs of a situation, of the telling thing to do at a crisis, which belonged to the nature of Lemaure. It may have been a rush of the feeling that temperaments like hers afford with such difficulty to children, animals, the sick or suffering, anything that is incapable, incomplete, or unlike themselves, even though that thing may be their own. It may have been an attack of nerves, from which she had lately suffered at intervals, for physical reasons which she refused to recognise. Or it may have been that slight divine spark of real understanding, some relic of sympathy from those moments they had lived together in the concert-hall, that passed from Antoine's dark eyes to hers, as she stood so near him and on a level.

Anyhow, apart from analysis, which is in any case the poorest way in the world of approaching feminine human nature, Henriette's proceedings remain to chronicle. She caught Bébé's hand as the prince had done, and kissed it passionately in her turn. Then she swung about with a wonderful smile.

" I am infinitely indebted to your kindness, sir," said

Henriette, "but it is impossible for me to profit by it. I must pray you to excuse me."

The magnificent Heinrich gaped at her, indignant and incredulous. Was it credible that she could mean it ?

"Was I not right ?" his father cried in triumph. "The child, that is the king. We clumsier sovereigns must bow. Not a word, madame," he continued, his broad face full of benevolence, as she tried to speak again. "It is our loss, that is all. Even such as we know what children are, and what mothers," he added gruffly.

He was enormously touched and pleased by the devotion of this brilliant young creature. To move a German audience, Henriette's great effect could hardly have been better chosen. The scene, in the stout prince's eyes, was a poem : that poem of domesticity which few can match. He longed to go and tell his wife.

Henriette had time to reflect on her success, among other things, during the long dark drive home in the carriage ; while, unseen by Philip, the tears ran slowly down her cheeks : and Bébé, tired out, slept in her arms.

When James got home, he found his wife in the kitchen, still weeping a little, it is true ; but consoled by relating to the charmed Angèle a detailed history of her day in the world, and the smart company she had seen at the hotel.

Henriette and the bonne, usually at daggers drawn, were devoted friends for the time ; and at the moment when Jem entered, she was taking Angèle's valuable advice in the matter of a change of coiffure, which, on the model of one of the prince's suite, she had been contemplating during the afternoon.

Jem interrupted it rather brusquely.

"Henriette ? Nothing wrong, is there, my dear ?"

The tears were still visible, and he thought as he looked anxiously down at her she seemed unusually pale.

"No," she said, rising. "It's all right, stupid. I came here for society till you came, that's all. I cannot stand being alone in that room at night, when the wind is shrieking. Get the supper, Angèle," she said rather wearily, and passed with him into the other room.

"And now we are all alone," she observed, heaping up the

fire, when she had given him a brief and rather fantastic account of things, which still left him dissatisfied. "With a whole hour before papa comes: which, as you were so jealous of him last night, is a great relief to your mind."

"I wasn't specially," James reassured her. "I rather like your father."

"Of course you do," said Henriette, "just to make yourself disagreeable. Well, to go on with what I was saying, you shall have your supper because you are always so bourgeois and hungry. And after supper, if you go on behaving nicely, I will fill your disgusting pipe, and you shall smoke. We'll both smoke," said Henriette, and waited a minute expectantly. Her smoking usually annoyed him.

"Any more?" inquired Jem. He knew well from her manner that there was. Her great beautiful eyes were darting everywhere except in his direction.

"Yes, one thing more." She clasped his arm tightly as she knelt beside him. "If you don't say silly sudden things and make me nervous—while *we* are smoking after supper—I'll tell you a secret."

M. Lemaure returned very late, and found them together. Henriette had stopped smoking some time before, but it seemed to have soothed her, for her head lay on her husband's knee. She sprang quickly up when her father entered and met him eagerly.

"Tu es content?" she asked in the formula, putting her arms up to him.

"Je suis content? ma fille," said he, and kissed her.

Then she drew him into her pretty room, planted him in a cushioned chair, and forbade him peremptorily to talk until he had thoroughly warmed himself and drunk the hot spiced wine she had prepared for him. When he looked quite comfortable to her critical eye, she sat down on Bébé's stool at his feet and began an examination.

"First, the reception," she announced. "Who was there?"

"Everybody in St. Aviel," said M. Lemaure, "with the exception of those unfortunates who were not."

"There's one bad mark," said Henriette, touching it off with a finger upon his knee. "Second question: how did everybody behave?"

"Very noisily. Especially everybody's wife."

"I am somebody's wife," said Henriette with dignity, and she put down another finger.

"Third question," he prompted her: "How was everybody's wife dressed? Answer—not so well as somebody's. Take off those two fingers, my child."

Henriette took them off and seized his hand.

"Dearest," she cried, losing sight of the examination, "did you remark Suzanne Schindler?"

"Quite plainly. It is not easy to miss her."

"She wanted to scratch me," said Henriette pensively.

"I congratulate you," said M. Lemaure. "She concealed it very well."

"Might I ask why the lady wanted to scratch you?" Jem inquired.

"Certainly, dear," she said, beaming on him. "Firstly, because she always hated me. Secondly, because she has grown fat and I have not. Thirdly, because she knew I knew she used to sing twice as well as she does now. Fourthly, because the trimming of her——"

"That'll do," James said hastily. "I am only surprised she refrained."

"She sang extremely well, I thought, my dear——"

"Papa!"

"This evening," her father finished suavely. Henriette looked at him in disdainful silence. "And she told me at the reception that she thought you were prettier than ever."

"Dear Suzanne," said Henriette. "She always had rather a heavy hand in compliments. An ox among the teacups, as Jem and those people would say."

"If she could have a specimen of yours," Jem murmured, "she might know what a light hand is."

"Go to sleep," Henriette advised him. "Come papa, get on. What were the princes and princesses like? Did they behave nicely to you?"

"Perfectly, all of them. That is, of course, all except Prince Heinrich, who did not behave at all."

"Really?" said Henriette, deeply interested. "Jem, I told you to go to sleep. I am talking to papa, in confidence. *Apropos* of young men, papa, did that little Irishman sing again?"

Her father nodded. "I asked him to come to visit me in Paris. He is a nice young fellow, modest and comme-il-faut."

Henriette put up a critical lip. "He has—taste," shesaid.

"Excellent taste," her father agreed. "He fell in love with Bébé."

Jem's eyes came open again. "What name?" he demanded.

Henriette took a long breath and told him. "I knew a fellow——" he began.

"No, you didn't," said Henriette. "Or at any rate it is not the same. This one is a sweet little cherub, several yards long—as long as his name—with the smile of an infant. And so, being an infant, of course he made friends with Bébé—who has just about ten times his artistic capacity. Oh papa! if you had seen his face in the Larghetto. I nearly cried."

She had dropped her head upon her arms on his knee, and her father laid his beautiful hand upon it. There ensued a long pause, while both the men watched her in the firelight.

"Do you think," said Henriette, "that I shall ever hear him play the Concerto?"

"Why not, my love?"

"Quisait?" she shrugged. "Who knows, *why not*. Only when I think about it, it seems—rather ridiculous."

She laughed suddenly, the most despairing little laugh, more piercing to those who heard it than her ready tears could have been.

"It was ridiculous," said Henriette, turning her head over on his knee, "when I had you. Heaps of times, when I was alone, I used to giggle at it. Then he came along"—she threw out a hand—"and it got a little sillier still. He knows it quite well really, and so do you. Well, things can't go on for ever like that. When it gets too silly to bear, *they* will say, 'Look here, this is enough.'"

She laughed again, and rose to stir the fire.

"I wonder," she said, as she knelt holding her hands to it, "if I tried hard to grow up—if Jem gave me lessons, in English, how to be good—if *they* would let me be the mother of a great artist. You know the kind I mean: the good, old mother, who sits in a lace cap to listen in the front row. The good—*old*—mother."

She rose and faced them defiantly on the hearth, a slim, white figure against the blaze.

"I have always had what I wanted. Why shouldn't I have that? What are you shaking your head about, papa? Shouldn't I be a charming, good, old mother?"

"Charming, beyond a doubt. But as for the others——"

"Not my style," Henriette suggested, chin in air.

"I simply cannot see you, my dear. It may be my stupidity. Ask Jem."

"Jem's cross," she said, eyeing him askance.

He rose quickly and stood beside her. Henriette leant against him, looking more childish than ever when they were together.

"Well," she said, with her little grimace at him, "Tell me I am perfect, then, and I won't tease any more. Quick, say it."

Jem shook his head.

"Can't you?" she said gazing up. "Not one nice little one? Not even to-night?" No response. "Well—nearly perfect, then."

"All I want," said Jem, very low.

"I am all he wants, papa! I am—sufficient. Do you hear—can you believe it? All these years have passed, and I—still—suffice. Congratulate your daughter, darling."

M. Lemaure rose in his turn, held her face a minute, and looked into her eyes. James and she were poles asunder, but they were alike in one thing: their secrets were not difficult to divine. Indeed he felt deeply, looking into those almost unearthly eyes, that "they" the strong arbiters of her rebellious life, had dealt well with Henriette.

He did not congratulate; but blessed her with a smile, and sent her to bed.

Next morning he left them, and returned to his studious solitude. Neither he nor James, however, forgot her words and manner that night; indeed, they had no chance to forget, for Henriette left them no time. Like all her great dramatic coups, the one she had foreshadowed then to their hearts came swiftly. Swift telling is the best for it also. As though following out one line of her planning all that winter through—a winter almost unheard of on the coast for storms and fury,

Henriette, as it seems, made efforts to "grow up." It really seemed to Jem, watching her, that she had at last laid aside her clinging youth; or—the fancy struck him at times—as if she wished to demonstrate to him, just for a season, as a child plays seriously at being old, her whole conception of what a wife could be.

Jem struggled bravely; fighting the fates whose voices he heard each night in the howling wind; but something much deeper than his reason told him that he could not keep her, and so it proved.

The swift end to the drama of her life came in early March, when she did what she could to fulfil her promise to him by giving him a little daughter, a feeble spirit, who looked out upon the hard world only to leave it. They told Jem that Henriette should not know of it; but she looked at him with her beautiful wild eyes, and he told her the truth, as he had never failed to do.

"She was very ugly," said Henriette then to console him. "If she had grown up like that I should only have hated her; and if she had grown up pretty, I should have hated her worse. It's all—for the best—perhaps."

Later came fierce rebellion; and later still some graver thoughts, as she clung to his strong hand.

"Papa will be sorry," she said thoughtfully. "You had better tell him when you go—I am content."

II. HUNTLY

I

MRS. EDGELL, sweeping along the passage to her husband's study in the wing late on Sunday afternoon, found him, as she expected, comfortably extended on two chairs. A book was on his knee, but he was not reading. She suspected by his look that he had just woken up. He turned his eyes to her lazily as she rustled in.

"Aren't you coming to tea?" she said rather testily. "It has been in for ever so long."

"Who's here?" said Huntly with a yawn.

"Only the Culver girls, and you know you like them."

"I like 'em," said Huntly, "on weekdays. I can't stand any women on Sunday."

"How absurd you are," said Mrs. Edgell, advancing into the room. Sometimes she wished that her husband would not be such a schoolboy: it laid unnecessary stress on the difference of age between them. She went to the window and paused there. The study she had furnished for him was a wonderfully charming room, and the fresh spring garden looked delicious from its long windows. Mrs. Edgell, who, though lacking in the higher critical powers, had the instinct for comfort of a cat, felt a vague satisfaction in lingering.

"As if," she went on, "the day made any difference in people."

"It don't," said Huntly, "in us—except to cloud the brain a trifle. But women change all through, not only the swish in their clothes. I shan't get a spark out of Dolly Culver to-day, and she's not half a bad little cat on weekdays. Think I'll stop here, Sylvia, thank you."

Mrs. Edgell sat down. After all, what was the use of a grown-up daughter if she could not look after visitors for a few minutes; it was always convenient to shift things on to Isabel; besides, she was exceedingly fond of Huntly.

"I think you might come," she said, softening her tone to one of mild injury merely. "Dorothy is going to play to us

presently, and it's the first day Hal has been downstairs, and he has hardly seen you."

"Down, is he?" said Hal's father. "That's all right. Taking a dose of flattery, eh?"

"Well, really he is clever," said Mrs. Edgell. "No one could help laughing at the things he says. I can't think where he picks up his words. I often have to go to the dictionary."

Huntly frowned.

"For Lord's sake," he said, "don't set him up about his style. That's the worst of you women. Hal has no idea of using words. That French kid of Jem's has more."

Mrs. Edgell fired up.

"Huntly! The boy's English is a disgrace. And Hal talks like a book; everybody says so."

"Lazy and slipshod," Huntly pronounced. "He chucks words about, like all reading youngsters of his age; but he has yet to begin to learn their value."

"You are such a tease," said Mrs. Edgell. "So perverse, I mean."

"That's better," said Huntly. "Try again and you'll hit it."

"You're like a horrid boy," she said, smiling unwillingly.

"Like Hal, in fact?"

"Well, you are," she said softening. "Only he's not a horrid boy.'

Huntly chuckled gently. "I say, Sylvia." He gave her a sidelong glance as she sat in an elegant and meditative posture by the open window. "That kid plays well."

"Antoine?" She turned round. "Why, when have you heard him?"

"He's been at it up there this afternoon." He jerked his head in the direction of the upper rooms of the wing. "Not fooling either: working like the deuce."

"This afternoon!" The colour came slightly to Mrs. Edgell's cheek. "You mean to tell me he has practised to-day?"

"Oh lor', I forgot," said Huntly, who had a boy's objection to tale-bearing. "I suppose he's another of the people to whom the day makes no difference."

"I'll see about that," said Mrs. Edgell, the line of her

mouth tightening a little. "It's like his coolness: and without even asking if he was disturbing any one."

"Don't concern yourself about me," said Huntly. "It's rather soothing to hear anybody exerting themselves. I thought," he added, "you said Dolly Culver was going to perform."

"Playing," said Mrs. Edgell, "is a very different thing from practising. I should have thought you would have seen that. Besides, Dorothy always knows how to choose suitably. She has a really fine sense in those things for such a young girl. Well,"—she rose—"I *expect* you to come, Huntly. It is hard on poor Dolly, to have only us three to listen."

"Oh, well," said Huntly, "it spoils your sleep to be expected: so I suppose I shall have to. Tell you what; I'll fetch that kid up there along, and make him listen too."

There was sufficient entertainment in the thought to lend him energy to mount the stairs.

Antoine was sitting on his bed, the violin beside him. He was much surprised at his uncle's entrance, and stared.

"You're expected," Huntly informed him, "when tea-time arrives, to come down to tea."

"Is it arrived?" said Antoine.

"Imperceptibly," said his uncle, "without a bell. Tea-time to-day emerges, so to speak, out of the void. I was asleep too, as it happens."

"I was not asleep," said Antoine, still staring. The likeness and unlikeness of Huntly to his father was fascinating. It appeared and vanished constantly in face and voice.

"Then you ought to have been," said Huntly. "You are not expected, Antoine, I may mention, to make a noise on Sunday."

No answer for a minute. "The organ over there," said Antoine, turning his eyes towards the spire of the church visible above the trees from his window, "has made a noise."

"That," said Huntly, "is entirely different. An organ may deafen you if it likes, but the least squeak of a scale awakens comment and condemnation."

"Oh," said Antoine, his brows contracting. His uncle's words were as bad as Henry's. He was a most peculiar man

altogether, by no means as easy to deal with as his father; but the likeness was attractive when it came, and his presence decidedly preferable to that of any one else in the house, except possibly Isabel Guthrie. His uncle seemed to be waiting for him, so he put the violin hastily away and rose.

"You'd better bring it down," said his uncle, watching his deft decided movements. "The expectation may extend to your obliging the company."

The boy jerked round. "You mean," he said, "that I shall play to them."

"I hope I mean that," said Huntly. "It sounds like my native language."

Antoine, after another blank stare, laughed suddenly.

"You are curious," he observed: and as he went down at his uncle's side, put his hand upon his arm.

Huntly gave him a quick, almost shy look. The boy had been three days in the house, and he had not approached to grasping him at present. He had been annoyed at intervals by his pertness, and he felt for his wife in her annoyance at the calm independence of his behaviour; at intervals he was amused by him, especially when he "flared out" as just now; when he laughed he was almost engaging. He was still smiling a little, yet his uncle could have sworn he was on the edge of tears three minutes since when he broke in upon his meditations. He was alien altogether, past the possibility of ignoring in his own well-trained, well-oiled household. Huntly hated bother, and he felt a slight resentment against Jem for letting him in, without fair warning, for what seemed vaguely to promise it.

The offer to take him had originally been Huntley's own, and it had happened to fall at a critical moment. James, who had suffered lately from malaria in Egypt, had allowed himself a short interval in Paris on his return, and had devoted his leisure to quarrelling with his brother-in-law. He had evidently committed himself to certain theories as regarded Antoine's future, and being put to it in French circles to defend them, was becoming more downright and didactic at every moment. It was then that Huntly, warmly in accord with his brother's educational views, and seeing, on the evidence of recent letters, old Jem with his back to

the wall, barked at by a foreign herd, felt a family call to step in. The elder Lemaure was ill, it seemed : the younger on the point of marrying : Jem himself clearly once more tugging at the rope of civilisation ; so that Jem's younger boy was for the moment superfluous. Huntly, on the other hand, was in want of company for his own delicate precocious son, so he offered in a short, well-worded letter to solve the difficulty by taking Antoine under his own roof for a year.

The well-planted offer took effect. James, after a week's complete silence, wrote acceptance in terms as brief. He saw " points " in Ted's proposal, and was much obliged to him and Sylvia for making it. A bit more of Lucien's jawing, and he would have carried off the kid himself to California. As it was, he would " square " his father-in-law—an operation needing, it appeared, some delicate attention—and leave him to " forward the freight " early in April. " It's a light weight," said Jem, " but it's not so badly put together. You'll soon see how it works, if you've the smartness I give you credit for. It'll do you good to try." He added that if Huntly got sick of it, he could pass the boy on later to Lucien, who was playing with an English appointment, and would probably settle in London for the winter. " Only for Lord's sake, Ted, give his wife time to improve his temper first, or he'll rake it up again, and it's rough on the kid. Besides, I'm no good at fighting by post : not to mention I'll be taken up with a big thing out there, and I'm not so young as I used to be."

After which Jem took a chaffing farewell of his younger brother in three lines, and shortly after left Europe for a " year or two " to try a new continent, and new work which promised distraction very much to his taste ; and with no further directions as to treatment, Huntly was left to make the best of the " freight " when it came.

In the drawing-room, Antoine's aunt's reception of him was rather crushing, and for a time he retired into the background.

" You really can't expect any tea," she said sotto voce " when you come as late as this."

Antoine apologised gently, taking note of the fact, by the way, that his uncle was fed without protest. Yet his uncle

knew when tea-time "emerged" in this house, and he did not. They all talked to the young ladies, to whom he was not presented. One of the young ladies was very pretty, so Antoine watched her at intervals, and seized some cake on the sly with a glance at Henry. He had early discovered that Hal agreed with him in liking good things to eat, so he regarded it as safe to take him into the cake conspiracy. Hal had finished his own tea long since, and was occupying the whole of the sofa, coughing at intervals, and making witty observations in between. After a time Miss Guthrie saw that Antoine had nothing to drink, and gave him the milk he asked for. Antoine had a thrill of gratitude towards her, for he was very thirsty. He drank it nearly all, and with the last drops tempted Friday, the black kitten, to him across the floor, round the skirts of the two young ladies. Henry saw this proceeding too, for it was not easy to escape his sharp eyes; besides, Friday was his, and Tony had no right to feed it. The kitten, however, was as thirsty as Antoine, and quite obviously as grateful to him as he had been to Isabel, though it expressed it simply by leaping on his knee with a subdued rattle in its throat. Antoine attended to it with one finger, but the conversation happened at this point to become suddenly interesting, and his ears and eyes were diverted from Friday to those who talked.

They had been dealing with preachers at Roxminster, the neighbouring cathedral town.

"The Bishop next week, is it?" said Mrs. Edgell. "There, Isabel, what a comfort we did not go to-day. I had thought," she said to the guests, with a slight glance round, "of taking my nephew over to service to-day, but we gave up the plan. Now he can hear one of the finest preachers in England next Sunday."

The pretty Miss Culver threw a slightly mischievous smile to the boy, which Antoine instantly returned; while her sister continued.

"It is a pity," she said, "that Dr. Hugueson will not be playing next Sunday. I never care much for that young Vidal, do you?"

"You never mean old Hugueson's going away?" said Mrs. Edgell.

"Yes, to London. Isn't it unheard of?"

"He had better let young Vidal take it altogether," said Mrs. Edgell. "If you ask me, he's as mad as a March hare. Why, he has been there as long as I can remember, or the Canon either." (Mrs. Edgell always spoke of her father by his title.) "It's high time we had a change."

"Oh, Mrs. *Edgell!*" cried Dorothy, who was emphatic. "I think he's a *duck*. And I adore his old house too in the close; it's a *pet*. I was so sorry when I stopped going there for lessons."

"Let's see—it's young Randall you learn from, isn't it?" said Huntly.

"Yes," Dorothy answered, "but he's not half so sweet as his father."

"Over seventy, is it?" Huntly inquired. "When I turn sweet, I hope you'll let me know."

"Now, Mr. Edgell," said Dorothy. "He really is. He's like a dear old spider, shambling about the streets."

"Shambling is good," said Huntly. "I'll practise it."

Dorothy turned from him to Antoine, whose eyes, alight with interest, had caught her attention.

"He's one of the sights of Roxminster, you know," she said. "Mind you don't forget to look out for him when you go over."

"I wish to see him," said Antoine simply. Which was the fact, for the man they discussed was one of his grandfather's oldest friends in England, and he had the full intention of going to see him as soon as a chance offered Roxminster was eight miles away from Wainfield by road, and a good half-hour's journey by rail; but Antoine had an easy idea of distance, as he had of his present circumstances. His view was that if it was necessary to go, he would get there; and three days at Wainfield had made a change of some sort in the near future distinctly necessary. Merely to go anywhere out of range of his aunt's voice would be a comfort, or the glance of her sharp blue eyes. An expedition to the town on his own account promised relief from these and other things that annoyed him daily in his uncle's house. He merely noted that it would be advisable to go soon, before Dr. Hugueson left for London, and had no further misgivings on the subject.

Absent as he was, turning over these matters, he suddenly became conscious that the pretty Dorothy was looking at him with amusement.

" Plaît-il ? " he said rousing, for he thought he must have missed a remark.

" Don't go to sleep, Antoine," said his aunt, looking round. " Come, you shall ring for them to take away the tea, and then you might fetch Miss Culver's violin out of the hall, do you hear ? She is going to be so very kind as to play to us."

Mrs. Edgell's voice was naturally high and petulant, and she spoke to Antoine, being a foreigner, louder than was strictly necessary. He almost visibly winced from her tone, as, tucking Friday under one arm, he rose to obey.

" He's anything but deaf, Sylvia," Huntly observed.

" Well, I never know if he understands," said Mrs. Edgell. " He's got such a way of looking at you."

" I think he's rather a pet," opined Dorothy, to whom everything was that, that was the least unusual. " Who is he ? "

" My husband's eldest brother's boy." Mrs. Edgell lowered her voice. " Come to have lessons with Hal for a year, before he goes to school. His father's gone off to the other side of the world, and left him to be brought up anyhow abroad. Dear Mr. Edwardes is in despair about him, he's so ignorant."

" Oh my, Doll," said Henry. " You ought to see his spelling. I'm not half sure though, he doesn't put it on a bit. Of course it is a lark to make old Teddy sit up and bleat."

" Hal, dearest," Mrs. Edgell murmured. Such mention of the vicar on Sunday was hardly suitable.

" I have yet to learn what Edwardes thinks of him," said Huntly.

" I can tell you, papa," said Hal. " He thinks he's an incorrigible athlete."

" Æsthete," his father suggested.

" Oh, well," said Hal, with a frown. He objected to being put right in public.

Commentary was cut off, as the boy himself returned. Huntly kept him well in view during the Culver sisters'

performance. He sat still and solitary, for Friday, who disapproved of stringed instruments, had deserted him for the most distant corner of the room. His eyes were on Miss Dorothy's face as she played an exquisitely-chosen piece of music called a "Meditation" on something which was no doubt worth meditating upon. Miss Dolly was shy in playing; she had turned rather pink, and her eyes were bright and earnest, and her wrist looked very pretty with the flash of the jewelled bracelet upon it. In fact, Huntly agreed with his nephew that she was quite worth watching. At the end, she sank with a sigh into a seat, and pushed back the side-waves of her hair.

"I think," Mrs. Edgell said pensively, "that I like that best of all your things, Dorothy. It suits you so well."

Presently, after Aimée had played, society demanded a return of favours.

"Now, Isabel," said Mrs. Edgell, who never gave up asking her daughter to perform in public, and complaining of her when she refused, as she invariably and quietly did.

"With all the money your poor father spent on you," Mrs. Edgell was wont to argue, "and the scales I used to stand day and night." The reproach was elaborated now.

"Save me, darling," said Isabel, putting an arm round Antoine. "That is what you have come for, did you know? Whenever mother worries me, you must offer instantly. Do you mind?"

"Oh no," said Antoine, and could not imagine why they laughed. It was so obvious to do promptly what Isabel asked him; besides, he had not the least objection to playing, especially in the state of mind which had been heaping itself up recklessly within him all day, like a turbulent wave of which the crest seemed choking him. He had an idea that if he tried he could cut through the atmosphere of this English house, and find the one he had known behind it. At any rate, it was worth attempting.

The pretty Culver sister was much amused by his rapid businesslike proceedings; but Aimée on the piano-stool rather stared at the part he handed her.

"Preislied," she said. "Oh, haven't I played this?" She looked through it and touched some of the chords.

Antoine waited for her impatiently, frowning with his head up ; this was not her business really, the look said ; it was his.

Huntly chuckled silently observing him. " I knew there was some devil in it," he was thinking. As the boy played however, his expression changed to surprise and a slight discomfort. Internally he felt that a kid of eleven had no business to feel like that, and certainly no business to proclaim the feeling in the cool sanctuary of his house It was the same sensation in a higher degree that his looks and tones had aroused before ; shortly formulated, it meant that he was going to be a bother ; and if so, Jem's kid or not, he would have to be stamped upon a little.

Even while he thought so, he admitted the beauty of what he heard ; for he had trained his judgment to work with his senses ; and it had been his business, as the man pointed out as " clever " by his Oxford and London circles, to keep an invulnerable attitude with regard to art. Before the other thoughts asserted themselves, Huntly was even knocked over for half a minute : and got to his legs again feeling the least trifle crestfallen and resentful, as a person in such circumstances must do.

" I suppose," said Mrs. Edgell, " that is what you call opera-music, is it not ? " She was flushed with the same annoyance of which Huntly recognised a sample in his own sentiments. In an older performer it would have been simply culpable lack of taste, to crush out Dorothy's restrained and elegant effort with so much noise and show. As it was only a child, some of the responsibility fell back on her, which was an additional grievance.

Dorothy felt it, naturally. As Aimée turned about on the stool, she sat up, and they exchanged one glance.

" Why didn't you *tell* me, Mrs. Edgell ? " she cried piteously. " Of course I would not have played." Her little face was as pink as possible. She put out a hand and seized Antoine.

" You *nasty* little boy," she said with energy. " Do you know you have made me feel simply horrid ? "

" You like it ? " he said, scanning her rather eagerly. Seeing her flushed look his heart went out to her. Here was a person who felt something strongly at least. The other faces had hardly changed, for all his efforts : and the

room with all its paralysing elegance seemed to crush back on him.

"Do you play in public?" said Aimée with solemnity.

"Oh no: not yet."

"Who trained you?"

"M. Lemaure."

"The young or the old?"

"B-both," said Antoine, his voice wavering audibly.

Miss Guthrie quietly made room for him, and he shrank gratefully down behind her. She offered some explanations to Dorothy's eager questioning.

"To think of it," the girl cried. "Why, Mr. Hugueson, my master, studied with Lemaure. He boasted he was the last pupil he ever took; just shows what *his* statements are worth, doesn't it, Antoine. Did you ever see Mr. Hugueson, I wonder; I mean mine?"

The boy nodded merely. The reaction from his big effort had caught him, and he was speechless.

"Poor pet," said Dorothy, having realised it: turning aside to have a vigorous passage with Huntly, and soon after rose to go. She said a few more sweet little words to Antoine at parting, and his dark eyes followed her regretfully out of the room. He felt, as the door shut on her, that he was left in the cold—or worse to him, the cool—again.

"Do you want a game of Halma, dear?" said Isabel kindly to her young step-brother.

"Don't care if I do," said Hal, yawning.

"No, Isabel," her mother intervened. "I had rather that you did some quiet reading upstairs. I have no objection to Henry's having a game with Antoine, if they play quietly. But don't forget," she added, pausing at the door, "that I want you all in the library at seven, for hymns."

II

When Henry forgot that Antoine was there for his moral advantage he had no great objection to him. How he discovered this fact it is hard to say, for everybody in the house took the greatest pains to keep it from him. But of course Hal knew it before his cousin arrived under the Wainfield roof, and made the world aware of his natural resentment.

However, when he came, the French boy's absurdities proved quite entertaining, and his ignorance was a perpetual consolation. Isabel, the wisest member of Henry's circle, had suggested to him that it would be a kindness to teach his cousin to speak correctly before he went to Radfield the following year, and Hal gave his great mind to this duty from the first.

The only doubt was, as with the spelling, whether Antoine did not sometimes do it on purpose. The worst of Tony was, that one could never be quite sure when he was not acting. He tried the wildest experiments, both in the matter and manner of his discourse; his power of mimicry alone was almost alarming, as when for instance he shadowed the manner of Hal's mother or father, careless apparently whether they noticed it or not. In the same way he was careless in language, speaking sometimes surprisingly well, sometimes in a torrent of loosely-strung words, which left Henry as critic quite helpless. Nor could Hal get him to be properly serious on the subject of his own instruction.

"How he is thin, that little cat," said Antoine of the black kitten.

"We call little cats in England, kittens," said Henry.

"Kitten, yes: and how do you call that noise they make?"

"Mewing—confound the brutes."

"No, no; the rolling noise." He lengthened the "r" suggestively.

"Purring. Fancy not knowing *that*."

"This kitten—purrs," said Antoine to himself.

"No, you ass! This kitten *is purring*. You can't say the simplest thing."

"But purrs—is purring—that is the same."

"It's nothing of the kind. You'd better accept what I tell you," said Hal compassionately. "'Is purring' is right. 'Purrs' is wrong. No one ever says: 'this cat purrs.' You might as well say: 'This tea gets cold!'"

"Cats are purring the same language in England and in France," said Antoine after an interval, as he rubbed the black kitten's chin with careful fingers. "That had a wrong sound," he added, glancing towards his cousin.

"It had an idiotic sound," said Henry.

"But what must I say?"

"Cats purr, of course, if you mean *general* cats, I mean."

"But I thought of two cats, this kitten one and the great one of my grandfather. Can I say: 'These two cats are purring the same?'"

"No, you can't," said Henry, frowning. "Hang it all, why can't you feel what it's right to say. Look here," after a considerable pause. "Suppose you say 'my dog fights'; and some one else says 'My dog is fighting.' What's the difference between those dogs? Come now."

"They are fighting both the two together," said Antoine promptly. "Have you seen a dog to fight alone with itself? Oh, pardon, but the dog that fights alone!" His giggle was infectious, and the teacher was caught unawares.

"What a fool you are," he said, in defence of his smile.

"But one could draw that dog," said Antoine, the tears in his eyes. "And I saw very well how you meant about the fighting. You shall see, now I will say them right."

Hal was appeased, even gratified. In spite of his father he had inherited taste for language; and another inherited taste for setting others right. When Antoine did not contradict him flat his gentle manners were rather soothing; only you could never be sure which of the two things he was going to do, or whether he was not going to do both simultaneously, so you had to keep an eye upon him constantly. This mixture of frankness and politeness he used to everybody; he no more dropped one ingredient with the little schoolroom maid who was Henry's favourite drudge, than he

dropped the other with Henry's father. The little maid beamed on Tony in consequence; and his uncle not infrequently frowned.

"Look here," said Huntly when finally, much against his will, he was goaded by his wife to speak to him on his general deportment in the house. "You're giving your aunt a lot of bother, and you'll have to drop it."

Tony expressed regret, with a look of inquiry; he was anxious to know what he had to drop.

"It's a great bore," said Huntly, "to be fetching you to meals and all that. You must look out, and be on the spot when you are wanted, do you hear?"

"But if I do not want the dinner?" said Antoine, as though offering a poser. His ideas of when to be hungry were different from theirs, having been used with his grandfather to breakfast at seven and lunch at twelve. The consequence was that he begged food from the servants at these times, and could avoid the proper hours without suffering.

"Then," said Huntly, his eyes narrowing up, "I commiserate you sincerely, but you must sit and watch us consume it. In all the more serious ceremonies of our civilisation, that has constantly to be done; to participate complacently without complete sympathy, Church, for instance——" Huntly paused.

Antoine broke out instantly.

"When you speak with those words," he exclaimed, "I do not *wish* to understand."

"Go it," his uncle applauded. "Why?"

"Because you make yourself to be—so not like papa."

"Don't let us wander from the point," said Huntly. "I never was much like your father, and you won't make me more so by staring at me all day long." The boy pulled his eyes off him, blushing a little. "What were we talking of?"

"The Church," said Antoine, "but that is not to talk of now."

"Oh," said Huntly. "Why?" He was not sorry to be diverted from stricture, which bored him. As the boy failed to answer, he demanded: "Are you keen on the Church, Tony?"

He struggled a minute, and then said, "I have seen how that is, to be keen."

"Your aunt, hey?" His wife, he knew, was concerned about Antoine's young mind, and watched narrowly for sprouts of papistical seed. Except on the personal side he was incurious about such things himself.

For all reply the boy stared out of the window. Huntly would have liked to ask him what he was thinking of with that frown and look of bitter longing; he had surprised it more than once.

"Well, to come back to the point," he said, "about being up to time. I must request you to drop all your engagements at mealtimes and at bedtime, no matter how entrancing. We don't want to have to think about you; you simply aren't worth it." He smiled pleasantly, waiting for him to take it in. "Behave in fact for a time so that we can forget you comfortably. That's the real point after all."

"Are you not forgetting me when I don't come to dinner?" said Tony.

"No," Huntly assured him. "You are forgetting us, which is quite another thing. We occupy our minds the whole time in considering what we shall do to you when you choose to appear."

Antoine's eyebrows were painfully fixed; Huntly was amused to see the trouble he had to follow. It was the power he felt to lead him a dance, intellectually and emotionally, that made him so inclined to his whimsical changes of front. He had ascertained that, in some way for which he could hardly account, he had had the boy's full attention from the first.

"Do to me," he repeated frowning. "But—you have not done it."

"No," said Huntly, "and I'll tell you why if you like." He considered what reason he should give, and then offered the true one. "We're rather a lazy lot. But, if you get dropped on suddenly one of these days, remember that I warned you."

Tony's frown deepened. "You do it suddenly," he said backing.

"A bolt," said his uncle, "out of the blue." He smiled

at him again. "You don't like sudden things, do you now?"

"I will try to remember," said Antoine; and went away very obviously depressed.

"One to me," thought Huntly. "Jem couldn't have done that better. All the same," he added to the thought, "I'll warn him twice before I do it, if I do it then. And I've more than half an idea I can get my knife in best without exerting myself at all." So pluming himself he strolled away.

Antoine was thus bound, greatly to his disappointment, to look on his world at Wainfield with new eyes; and as, fearful of an unreasoning nemesis, he followed orders and observed hours according to direction, the Roxminster plan, made so cheerfully, seemed to recede. All the same, before the week was out, he had a chance at least to take in the ground.

The boys' tutor, Mr. Edwardes, was an able antiquarian, and his favourite walk of historical research was architecture. Hal had imbibed a measure of his taste, and had been used, when his health allowed it, to explore with the vicar various points of interest in the neighbourhood. Roxminster Cathedral was of course, the richest mine of such instruction: and having turned up the subject on Saturday morning in lessons, Mr. Edwardes proposed to spend the afternoon in a "jaunt" to the town, combined with a "rummage" of that ancient edifice. Hal knew it slightly, Antoine not at all; so they might both improve their minds under his guidance: his own sons—presumably already improved to the extent of their capacity—came with them for the sake of the jaunt alone.

The plan happened to fall conveniently, as Mrs. Edgell had an engagement of her own. So, Hal being fairly well, and Mr. Edwardes very nearly as fussy as herself, she allowed the boys to go, though overwhelming Hal with wraps and instructions. Then, while Isabel went and paid duty-calls for her, she spent a happy afternoon with her friend Lady Culver, returning before night with a budget of county gossip for Huntly, which she could retail to him while he looked through the evening paper. Generally he let her talk, and listened or not as he liked; but to-night a portion of her news interested him sufficiently to distract him for some time, both from the papers and the thought of his dinner,

delayed by the boys' late return from town. The mention of his favourite Dorothy first served to fix his attention.

"*Poor* Dorothy," Mrs. Edgell was saying.

"What's wrong?" he said, glancing up.

"Everything: as wrong as can be; but her mother never would hear anything against that man—though I never called him a gentleman."

"Who has been no gentleman towards Dorothy?" He roused yet more.

"That horrid young Hugueson. I believe all those artist people are disreputable really."

"Don't bother to generalise. Let's have the facts."

Mrs. Edgell gave the facts as she understood them in a low impressive voice; exactly copied from the tone Lady Culver had been using to her that afternoon. She even borrowed some of her ladyship's phrases complete—at least Huntly noticed that they were certainly not her own. Apart from the effect lent by her manner, he gathered there was nothing very dreadful to be told. Dorothy's master had lost his temper during a music lesson, and had treated Miss Culver as she was not accustomed to be treated, that was what it came to. He had been surly where he was usually impatient: Dorothy had been frightened to tears: and finally Lady Culver had had an exhaustive examination of the maid who had been present at the lesson, and had "learnt things" which decided her to withdraw her patronage from the Huguesons. As to what "things" she had learnt, Mrs. Egdell revelled so persistently in innuendo and suggestion, that her husband soon grew hopeless of gathering the evidence, if there were any.

"You say he drinks," he snapped her up at one point. "How do you know?"

"The maid was almost sure," was the principal part of the reply to this. Huntly pleased himself for some minutes by leading her into a tangle of self-contradiction and self-mystification: then he remarked, turning back to the paper:

"I ask because I happen to know that he does."

"Huntly! How?"

"It came beneath my notice," was all he would answer. The fact of his taciturnity, however, suggested that his public notice was in question, and she was impressed.

"Huntly, how could you not have warned Sybil instantly?'

"I was going to do so at discretion. Since she has discovered reasons herself I shall leave it alone. It is better left alone, Sylvia, you understand."

"Of course I do," said his wife. "You never think you can trust me with a secret. I ought to know that. I suppose he has been getting into some scandalous row in the town." She waited a moment; then as Huntly merely read the paper she continued: "Such a young man too. It must be in the family, or he would never have collapsed so early. Mr. Guthrie had a theory that those cravings were always inherited, and he had wide experience. I should not at all wonder if the old man is an inebriate."

"Just as likely he's an abstainer," growled Huntly, who suffered from her convictions on the subject. "The son would have logically as good a chance of going wrong."

"Well, I prefer to find excuses for him," said Mrs. Edgell. "I was always sorry for the boy, with no mother to look after him, brought up anyhow by that silly old crank. One might have foretold how it would end."

"Do you foretell the same for Jem's kid?" Huntly inquired. "He is in the same situation, more or less."

"How can you joke about such things," said his wife, really indignant. "Your own brother's son."

"Well," said he, "being my brother's son, you see, is just what may secure him. As a fact, I am freer to joke about him than the other young fellow. I am afraid it is a bad case." He dropped his lazy tone of raillery as he spoke. "Strange was speaking of him the other day, and it's clear he's going down the hill. He has a respect for the family like all the precinct people. Old Hugueson is an institution, and in his best days was an institution to boast of. He is so still, only he is breaking up, poor old boy, and they say young Randall's responsible. He staked everything on the lad, and now the disappointment is killing him. That's how Strange puts it, and he seldom speaks too strong."

"Every one knows what Canon Strange is, Huntly. He must take a line different from every one else or he would never be happy a minute. He will be an old dotard himself one of these days, so no doubt he makes the best of others.

As if he ought not to be the first to clear a scandal out of the precincts! Why, I asked him straight out once whether Dr. Hugueson was not mad: and he admitted it, and smiled! And then when I said was it really safe to have him about, he said personally he felt safest in the cathedral with a madman over head. He really did say that, for I repeated it to Isabel."

Huntly replying merely with a smile, she proceeded:

"And as for gossip, he is a thorough old woman about it. He does not mind a real scandal, so long as he has something to talk about." She waited. "There's no one else I have talked to on the subject does not agree with me." She waited again, but the back of Edgell's newspaper was relentlessly presented to her. "And I *should* have thought *you* would."

The newspaper lowered.

"What am I to agree with? A proposition to clear Strange out of the cathedral, or Hugueson, or both?"

"Oh well," said his wife, "I know you are friends with Canon Strange. He does no harm particularly."

"It's Hugueson then who is a public nuisance?"

"Well, of course you may have your own opinion: but if I may speak for myself ——"

"Pray do," said Huntly.

"I would rather not meet him alone; really, and Sybil says the same. You would not believe how she has tried to know him: she even asked me to introduce her. 'A likely thing, my dear,' I said, 'when for all the years I have been in Roxminster society, in the same room with the man time out of mind, he passes me in the streets without a sign!' Imagine Sybil, too, who knows everybody worth knowing, but him. It is too ridiculous. Are you listening, Huntly?"

"Yes," he said. "As well as I can when I am slowly starving. Lady Culver has tried for years to know a man she is afraid to meet alone in the streets. Of course, society is a great protection. I am sure her point of view and yours are all they should be." Huntly yawned. "Do let us have the food up, Sylvia. Those kids have gone home with Edwardes."

"Well, you are precious late," he exclaimed, when, towards the end of dinner, the boys finally appeared.

"It's that kid's fault," said Henry, serenely nodding backwards as he entered the dining-room. "I don't suppose Edwardes will ever take *him* to Roxminster again."

"Eh?" said his father. "What has he been up tc now?" While the boys were with their tutor, he had a comfortable feeling that whatever occurred was Edwardes' responsibility. Antoine, strolling in after Hal, seemed as usual quite at ease and very hungry.

"He let poor old Teddy in for no end of a scare," Hal announced. "Give me my soup, mother, and I'll tell you about it." Henry always immensely enjoyed narrating to an audience. "Teddy," he began, "got us all safe into the cathedral, and an odd lot of people joined on to listen. Well, as soon as he had—embarked upon his—dissertation——"

"Child," his mother interposed irritably. "Do speak clearly."

"As soon as he had started jawing," said Henry, nodding to his cousin, "*he* cut. Pretty cool, wasn't it, because I'd heard all that rot about the nave and the clerestory dozens of times, and so had Gordon and Jack."

"You mean you *left* Mr. Edwardes?" Mrs. Edgell exclaimed.

"I did not know he would mind," said Antoine. "I thought he was talking for those other people. And," he added by way of further explanation, "I did not like that dark place where they went."

"The crypt," said Hal with an air. "He'd never seen a crypt before. I suppose they don't have them in your parts, do they, Tony? So he went off, papa, on his own devices: and Teddy never missed him for ever so long, because he was so wrapped up in his beloved periods, and when he did, of course he thought he'd got lost down in the crypt, and that his bones were going to crumble there mingled with the dust of ages (feel like doing it, don't they, Tony?)—well, anyhow, so round he went fussing like a fat old hen, and Jack and I after him. We hoped he'd swear but he never did—not a single damn. . . ."

"Henry," said Huntly solemnly.

"Well, you say it," said his son, "when you're not half so riled as that. So at last the service began and we had to

bundle out. Edwardes spent some more time describing him to a verger, and wouldn't he like to hear the description—oh my!" Hal glanced across again. "The verger was paralysed at the idea of anything like that having got into the cathedral."

"Get on, Hal," said Isabel, seeing her mother's impatience. Henry's opinion of his cousin seemed to have been increased by the day's exploit, a fact not likely to reduce her annoyance.

"Well, so when we had all got well settled into tea at Crompton's, in he walked as cool as a cucumber, and poor old Teddy simply fizzling. I told him all along that you'd never miss that tea," said Hal to Tony, "but he wouldn't have faith in my discernment. As if I didn't know you!"

Mrs. Edgell could stand it no longer.

"Well, of all the naughty proceedings," she cried. Hal ignored her completely.

"Now," he said to his father, "I'll give you three guesses, papa, where he had been."

"In the organ-gallery," said Huntly, without emotion.

"You are a beast," said Hal. "What made you hit on that?"

"First place I'd have gone to. Don't think much of your wits, Hal, for all your talking. You ought to have given Edwardes the lead, as he's hardly up to it."

"Huntly!" his wife cried. "Do you *realise* the trouble he has given to poor Mr. Edwardes?"

"Quite," said Mr. Edgell. "I hope Edwardes will give it him on Monday." He glanced at Antoine.

"He won't," said Hal, who knew his tutor. "He never does. He won't even complain to you, papa," he added, playing thoughtfully with his jelly, "because he thinks you have confided our moral education to his hands."

"Shut it, Hal," said Huntly. He smiled without, but inwardly he winced a little. Between his slackness, and Edwardes' lack of fibre, there was a long chance of his sharp son's knowing too much.

"I daresay he felt that he could trust you to make a statement," he added after a minute.

"Well," Hal defended himself, "the kid there would have

told you if I hadn't. Wouldn't you? Only his English is so rotten."

"It was quite true," said Antoine, "how you told. And very beautiful words," he added. He had at last satisfied his appetite, and seemed to be in good spirits; that hour's fine freedom had obviously stimulated him. His aunt, desperately annoyed by her husband's attitude, could do nothing profitable while he was there; but when Huntly, who had done his dinner, and was apparently content with the "statement" supplied, had left the table, she instantly fell on him.

"What do you mean by playing such tricks?" He turned to her surprised. "Hiding like that."

"I did not hide. I went to see the organ."

"Don't talk to me. Can't you see it from down below?"

"Not see it played," said Antoine.

"Oh. You mean to say Dr. Hugueson was there?"

"No, he is away. A young man played it. I hear him playing, and I went up."

"Expecting to find Dr. Hugueson, I suppose?"

"No," said Tony, patient with her. "I knew that was not him."

"Very lucky for you it was not," said his aunt.

"Luck?" He lifted an eyebrow.

"Yes. It would have served you right if you had found him and been frightened to death. Do you know what he's like?"

"I have not seen him," said Antoine, looking at her in his annoying vague fashion.

"You won't, in a hurry. He's a horrible old man, and he's furious if people go into that gallery without leave. I went once with Hal—and I'll take care never to go again. Especially after what I have heard to-day," she finished.

Hal the ever-ready glanced up sharply. Isabel, who had of course been treated to the scandal in full, spoke in haste.

"Were you up there, Tony, all the time? What were you doing?"

"I saw that young man who practised, and I talked to him; and then when he played for the service, I helped with

the stops. It was beautiful," Antoine pronounced. "They sing not so well in France."

"So you have been to service, have you? When you knew I meant to take you to-morrow. The coolness of it!"

"It was young Vidal playing, I suppose," said Isabel.

"Yes," said Antoine, nodding. "That was the name."

"How do you know?" Mrs. Edgell demanded.

"When the service was done I went down with him and outside his friend did seek him and called him that."

"Friend? What was he like?" asked his aunt with sudden interest.

"A tall man—dark." Antoine twisted up an imaginary moustache for the tall man.

"That's the very man!" Mrs. Edgell cried to Isabel.

"It was the son of Mr. Hugueson," said Antoine.

"How do you know that?" she cried in exasperation.

"Because I have seen him before."

"Before! When?"

"Before a very long time: when my grandfather taught him in Paris."

"Oh yes, of course. He didn't know you, eh?"

"Oh no. I was little—a kid—when he saw me. But I remembered him." Antoine made a slight but speaking grimace, which his aunt did not observe.

"That's a comfort," she said. "It would be awkward to be in any way mixed up with them."

"He teaches Miss Culver the violin," Antoine suggested.

"He did. He is not going to any more, for *good* reasons."

"It is not good, his teaching?" said Antoine; and for once his form of interrogation sounded like a statement.

"Nothing to do with that," said his aunt tartly. "You need not ask me about it, because I shall not tell you. Everybody will know before long." She nodded with satisfaction to herself. "The only possible excuse could be, he's mad like his father. I daresay it is so. They're a horrible lot."

"You find?" said Antoine, with a little sigh. He very much wished Isabel would talk to her. Henry fell on him for the expression, and the subject was happily diverted.

III

It was thus borne in upon Antoine that his next visit to Roxminster—a foregone conclusion naturally, since the first had missed its mark—would have to be made unknown to his aunt. This was vexatious, for he infinitely preferred to make straight for what he wanted, and not to have to go by roundabout routes. Also, delay in the attainment of the desired object was another thing against which his nature protested, for patience was a virtue Antoine neither possessed nor cared to cultivate. Yet it seemed that delay in this case was forced upon him, and not only in consideration of his aunt's prejudice against the Huguesons. He wished to be quite sure that his object was there before he tried at it anew. He had had some talk with young Vidal, whose practising he had interrupted in the gallery. Among a good deal of other desultory information, less interesting to Antoine, he had mentioned that he was engaged to play the services for two Sundays ahead, but that then he believed the " old boy," as he carelessly called his superior, could be expected to resume his duties.

He spoke of the organist with the most impatient contempt, surprising to Antoine; for M. Lemaure had never referred to Charles Hugueson without affection and respect, and had borne all the trouble Charles' son Randall had cost him with patience for his sake.

Antoine had a good memory when he set his mind to to remembering, and he recalled now having heard his grandfather and uncle speak often on the subject of this youth, who had been one of his own childish aversions when he came to Paris at eight years old; how Lucien Lemaure had besought to relieve his father of the burden upon him, and how steadily his grandfather—usually so deferential to Lucien's demands—had refused. And Antoine fitted on to these the memory of another evening, one of the recollections he guarded closely within him, when M. Lemaure, after parting with Randall in the hall, wishing him " bon voyage " with the

greatest mildness and solicitude, had come slowly limping back into the study where Antoine was waiting, and lifting his chin to look gravely into his eyes, had said: "And now there will be no more pupils for me in this life, but thou alone."

The next few weeks, as they drifted past the boy at Wainfield, did not improve his conditions for him. He was at intervals very nervous and miserable, and his aunt worried him perpetually. For, as her own child was unusually well in the warm spring weather, she chose to fuss over Tony instead, with quite good intentions, but conspicuously bad results; for her cares were wasted over little things, staying out late, draughts and wet shoes, what he ate or refused to eat—things the boy had never been accustomed to think of at all. Her continual dropping attacked what self-control he had, and made him more fantastic and annoying than ever in Mrs. Edgell's eyes. Antoine tried Henry for sympathy on the subject, but found little forthcoming, for personally Hal was fond of attention.

"You see," said Hal, "when I get a cold I'm laid up for weeks, and everybody is in a way about it, even papa. I daresay mother has lost her sense of what-do-you-call-it—proportion—in the matter."

Hal was a trifle abstracted, because he was engaged in inventing appropriate names for a large menagerie of baleful looking monsters, which Tony had designed him on slips of paper. The boy's gift for drawing, especially the grotesque, had soon been discovered by Hal. He produced each absurdity, after an interval of consideration, so swiftly, that Hal's humorous invention was taxed to keep pace with him. So he was not sorry to make him talk, for unlike his cousin, Antoine talked with so much vigour, that drawing was impossible except in the intervals of the dialogue.

"Mother is so nervous about me," said Hal pensively.

Antoine sighed. "Well, perhaps you cannot help that, to be ill, when she talks so much of it."

"Of course I can't help it!" cried Hal. "What *do* you mean? I've got hardly any constitution, mother says."

"Tiens!" said Tony, impressed by the word. He was silent, devoting himself to design.

"Don't you generally stop indoors when you've got a

cold ? " said Henry, for that was the point immediately in question.

Antoine considered. " There was one cold at Christmas I had," he said thoughtfully. " Not the sort with a cough, you understand. But grandpapa said all the same I should not go inside the church because of some little babies who might catch it."

Hal gaped. " What difference does having a cough make to going to church ? " he asked.

" That sounds horrid in a high place," said Antoine. He drew for a few minutes. " Also I might not stop at home when I had the bad cold," he proceeded, the exercise aiding reminiscence, " because my uncle said he was going mad with it; and so I should go out in the street and stay there until my cough was gone."

" What extraordinary people you must belong to," said Henry, whose own cough, easily provoked, was a weapon which he freely used at need to arouse attention and sympathy. To regard coughing as an æsthetic crime had never struck him : nor would it possibly have struck any but a Lemaure.

" I suppose you weren't ever really ill," he consoled himself. The boy drew himself together with a shrug, suggesting an uncomfortable memory.

" Once I was," he said, " for quite a lot of nights."

" Nights ? " said Henry. His cousin nodded.

" The dreams in my head were dreadful. I saw them when I was not at all asleep, worse than this animal I have drawn." He extended a frightful creature seriously. Henry considered it with equal gravity. " That's the beastliest yet," he approved it. " Well, go on about being ill. Did you have the doctor ? "

" No," said Antoine, pausing. " I do not think grandpapa knows any doctors : except M. Savigny, and he was always too busy to come."

" Tony ! " ejaculated Hal. " What rot you do talk. Is everybody mad where you come from ? what's a doctor for, I should like to know ? "

" I think," said Antoine vaguely, " in Paris they are different."

"How did you get well, then?"

"Grandpapa said that if I did not," said Antoine, "I should go to bed for a week—in the day as *well* as the night, you understand: and during that he would never speak to me. And so I got better very soon," he added dreamily, for the tail of a new nightmare was occupying his mind.

Henry gave him up, and was pretty soon diverted to another subject.

"I shall keep them," he said, gathering up the menagerie of horrors, "to show to papa when we go to bed. He'll appreciate them because he's got a sense of humour. Mother hasn't a scrap, more has Bell!"

"Yes, she has," said Antoine.

"No, she hasn't," said Hal. "She admits it herself, so now then! I get mine from papa. Canon Strange said that when papa speaks at meetings down there in Roxminster, his jokes are so good that no one understands them. He's making up some now for to-morrow night. That's what keeps him so quiet in there." He nodded in the direction of the library.

"He works to-day, your papa," said Antoine. He had not seen much of his uncle since the morning, which surprised him a little, for he had already classified Huntly as a new type—the unoccupied man. Neither his father, grandfather, nor uncle had ever had the time to spare at all seasons that Mrs. Edgell's husband seemed to possess. The way lavish households and large gardens appeared to flourish over here, without any effort spent but that of strolling round and speaking occasionally to maids and gardeners, raised one's opinion of England as a habitable country, compared with France: for those who liked it, of course. Personally Antoine preferred France; for the soft air, long nights, and large ceremonious meals, made him constantly stupid at Wainfield; and he found even the single hour of practice that he had promised his grandfather quite hard to attend to properly.

"Papa is going to knock them," said Henry proudly, "into fits."

"Knock who—where?"

"Don't you know he's candidate for Roxminster? Well, fancy not having found that out, and you a month in the house. It's one of their swell dinners to-morrow night."

"Uncle Ted goes to knock a swelled dinner into fits? Is that to be a candidate?"

"Don't be an ass," said Henry gravely. "Look here, don't you really know what a candidate is?"

Tony shook his head, and immediately received a lecture on politics and the poll as understood in England, in such detail as was calculated completely to bewilder the mind of the average foreigner. Hal waxed enthusiastic, and spared not to use all the technical words he knew, so his cousin was more impressed than enlightened. However, he asked questions, and listened seriously on the whole, so that the lecturer was content. And out of the whole rigmarole he gathered one or two useful facts: that his uncle and aunt were both going to the speeches and the dinner that preceded them, driving in early in the afternoon and staying the night with a political friend; that Henry had besought in vain to go, being cruelly refused owing to the lateness of the function, and that Isabel had promised instead to take him to a dramatic performance at the Cheynford Hospital.

"It's rather a bore you can't come," said Hal carelessly. "But of course mother won't let you go in the cart with a cold."

Antoine preserved a thoughtful silence for some time. Suddenly he laughed—his customary whole-hearted giggle.

"What's the joke?" said Hal, turning.

"It is funny what I was thinking of," Antoine explained.

"*I* know," said Hal. "You've got some sly plan for to-morrow, when we're all out."

"You know what it is?"

"Of course I do," said Hal.

"What is it?" said Antoine.

In the matter of safeguarding his own credit, Henry Edgell's instinct was perfect.

"Likely I'd tell you now, isn't it?" he sniffed. "I'll tell you, when you've done it, whether I'm right or wrong."

"I tell you, before I have done it," said Antoine, "that you are wrong."

The argument, conducted on these lines, occupied them both till bed-time.

The half-hour between breakfast and their departure to

the Vicarage was a pleasant waste time to the boys. Henry generally spent it with the newspaper in his father's vacant chair; Antoine waited for him outside, and improved his English in the society of the gardener or the groom. Hackshott, the groom-coachman, lived with his wife and son in the cottage beyond the stables, and Antoine was by this time on terms of intimacy with all three. The boy, who had charge of Henry's pony and the odd jobs of the small estate, was the least interesting member to him, as conversation on Bill's side consisted chiefly of a series of stifled giggles. But Hackshott and Mrs. Hackshott were very much better company, and always pleased to see Tony, and supply his mind with any details of the poultry-yard and the stable which he happened to require.

On the day in question, Mrs. Edgell informed Antoine that he might go over to school at the Vicarage, if he did not loiter about. Antoine received her solicitude politely, but read her directions in a liberal spirit, for he had pressing business to-day, as it happened, in the yard. He came upon Hackshott and his son cleaning the carriage-harness under cover, for it was raining. Harness-rubbing is a more sociable occupation than carriage-cleaning, which entails a constant hiss; so Antoine sat down on an inverted bucket, and prepared to be sociable.

"You shall drive into Roxminster to-day," he began.

"Yessir," said Hackshott.

"It is the big carriage you take?"

"Yessir. Missus'll have it closed."

"If it rains." Antoine observed the sky.

"Anyhow," said Hackshott, "if Missus goes, I shuts the carriage sure."

"And both the windows too?"

"No sir. Missus's glass up, and Master's down. I ought to know by this time."

"For these swell dinners, they always drive?"

"Yessir. Trains run badly, you see, in the afternoon. There's one at six, but that's too late; and there's one at two, but that's too soon."

"Because she sleeps then," said Antoine. Bill giggled and Hackshott reproved him.

"Will they come back in the train?"

"Yessir. To-morrer."

"Then you come back to-night, Bess and you?"

"Certainly, sir. That Blue Lion stable's not what Bess is used to. I gives her a good rest there, and does some odd jobs for master, and then we takes our way back easy."

"You will see your mother in Roxminster," said Antoine after a little pause. He knew a good deal more about Hackshott's family affairs than his employers did.

"I 'opes to," said Hackshott modestly. "Master said nothing about the time we returned; so I 'opes to see mother if all goes well."

"Could not one take Bill sometimes to see the grandmother?" Antoine suggested, regarding that ruddy youth.

"Last time, sir," he growled sheepishly.

"Master let me take 'im along last time as he went in 'isself." Hackshott filled out his son's statement. "He rode on the box, and come back inside. Not forgotten, *that*, eh, Bill?"

"Won't you take him along to-day?" said Antoine. "Oh, it rains now!"

"And you with a cold on you, sir," said Hackshott, reproachfully. His wife, like Mrs. Edgell, had had her say about Mr. Tony's delicate looks. "Bill he's got his business to-day," he added with some pride. "Bill he'll comp'ny Miss Isabel down in the cart in Cheynford 'Orspital Fete. And you just look out for that pony's knees, Bill, my lad. If Mr. 'Enery drives down the 'ill, things may 'appen."

"There he is now," said Antoine, as Hal wandered out of the garden gate. "Bill, he looks for you, I think. See, give me that to do."

As Bill hastily rose and went, Antoine took the seat he had vacated close to Hackshott.

"Don't you black your 'ands, sir," said the groom with an eye to his proceedings; but Tony went the right way to work on the plate, and he did it quicker than Bill.

"You see, I have to ask you something," said Antoine in confidence.

"Anythink that I can do, sir," said Hackshott.

"You say you do not take Bill along to Roxminster. No: but you can take me."

Hackshott stared. "Certainly, sir. If Master don't objeck."

"Master do objeck," said Antoine. "There is why you are to take me up there in the place of Bill."

Hackshott dropped work, gazed about him, and then suddenly doubled up and chuckled.

"Excoose me, but you do take it, Mr. Tony. For ideas you do. You outside, and Master in—him innocent, if you please—all the way to Roxminster in the rain. If you're wanting a rummy idea, I'll ask you to look at that."

"But it goes, the idea," said Antoine, frowning. "If you will not laugh, you will see that it goes all right."

"*I* should go," said Hackshott, thumping a fist on his knee. "That's what would happen, sir. The idea on it."

There was a pause.

"Is it the political meetin' you're after now, I wonder?" said Hackshott.

"No," said Antoine. "I want to visit a friend—just like you to see your mother."

"A friend, says he," the groom murmured. "And he not my Bill's age." He stared out. "And in the rain, and all, enough to catch his death. Likely I'd do it now, ain't it?" He put a large hand over Tony's, which for the moment was resting idle on his knee.

"You will not?" said the boy, with a most dramatic drop in his voice.

"I'd risk my place for you," said the groom weightily. "Just for having such an idea, I'd risk my place for you any day. But I should chuck it away, sir. I'm not sayin' Mr. Edgell don't let things go a bit; but when he hits, he hits hard. Take advice from me, and go easy, or you'll find that out for yourself." He spoke in solemn warning.

The boy heaved a sharp sigh.

"I *want* to go," he said, lifting a piercing look to the man's face. "I think of going out, away—not of Uncle Ted. Sometimes it comes to me like that—I cannot say it in English. I——" he flung a look of sheer revolt about him—"I do not like this place. It is not for me to like. Let me come with you, Mr. Hackshott—and after that I shall be good again."

"But you'll get cotched," said Hackshott wavering. The appeal for freedom shook him vaguely, the appeal to his

protection with far more power. His reason struggled feebly against a power he had never felt.

The boy shrugged. "Perhaps. I think not. It rains you see; and how shall he look out? Besides, if he looks, I shall be Bill: his cape—his umbrella if you like." He laughed swiftly. "I shall talk to you like him. Oh, it is easy—for a baby to do. I like doing those things." It was too obvious that he did.

"And your 'ealth, sir," said Hackshott in extremity.

Antoine snapped his fingers lightly for all reply: he sat motionless, his eyes devouring the spring rain, which sang to him invitingly. As a fact, he wanted it all over him very badly; he had not got thoroughly wet once since he came, which seemed rather a waste of April in the country; it might quite well account, indeed, for his feeling, so parched and irritable lately.

Hackshott looked upon him sadly.

"Done, sir," he said with solemnity. "It's against my principles, as I tell you. I never done such a thing in my life before. But there! there's no arguin'. I'll take my risks, if you'll take yours. I'd take yours, too, if I could," he added in soliloquy; for Tony, having accomplished his design, dropped the harness clinking on the floor, clutched the hand above his for one swift second with a strength surprising in his slight fingers, and was gone in Hal's wake into the rain.

Bill Hackshott wondered all that morning what he had done to make his father so "down on him."

At half-past three the same afternoon, Mrs. Edgell, her dressing-case, her rugs, and her husband, were all safely packed into the carriage. Hackshott waited patiently to put up the glass, until she had finished her last directions to Isabel. Huntly waited anything but patiently; for he was very nervous, and furiously anxious to start, and get his trying affairs under way. His wife felt his state of mind, and as she was also worrying about Henry, became more fretful in consequence.

"Oh, very well, Isabel, if he is so set upon going, you must take a cab, that's all. It is absurd to think of the cart if it pours like this. Take a cab and have your own way, only

if he gets a bad throat, don't blame me. In my opinion, if you took a little trouble to amuse him at home, and get his mind off this acting, it would be far better for all parties. Now is that all? Don't forget Hal's scarf if you're late coming home, and ask the matron to—oh yes, dear, certainly, not important enough to matter. Right, Hackshott."

She sank back, and the glass swung up, and was bespattered with raindrops instantly. There was a slight stoppage at the gate; Hackshott presumably led the horse through and mounted again.

"Waste of time," Huntly growled. "Why can't he drive through and let the fools shut it?"

"Because I have particularly told him to be careful of Bess. Hackshott may be over-careful, but I always say that is a fault on the right side. He asked dear, if he might rest her for an hour or so at the hotel before he comes back, and I thought it very sensible of him."

"Very," said Edgell. "He will be able to tattle with his relatives for the space of that time, and then he'll hurry off and forget my proofs. Hackshott's an old fool, like his horse. It's a confounded responsibility to be rearing fools on one's premises."

"If you mean William," said his wife, "William is an exceedingly good boy, and I am sure he can't help smiling. There was a brother of Mr. Guthrie's had a boy just like that; his face was made so, I suppose, for I remember talking to him about his poor uncle's last moments, and he was smiling all the time I talked."

"Well, if you've such experience, Sylvia, perhaps you won't mind reprimanding William next time it's necessary. For if he is sent up grinning to me again, I shall undoubtedly box his ears."

They went on at a steady pace, the rain spattering more and more fiercely, until they came to the top of the Roxminster hill. The carriage pulled up again for a minute, and Huntly, urged by his wife, called out of the window to know if all was right, for the roads were very treacherous with mud."

"Right, sir," Hackshott answered, and they went on again almost immediately with sufficient caution to satisfy even his mistress. The house of Captain Challoner, president of

the local Conservative Club, who was to entertain the prospective member, was about halfway down the long hill. Hackshott did not dismount this time to open the gate, a passing boy kindly performing that office for him. Huntly snipped a penny out of the window to the boy, before they swung up on to the drive. It took as long to get Mrs. Edgell out of the vehicle as it had taken to get her in ; but she was safely landed eventually, and Hackshott could drive off. Old Bess was proceeding soberly on her way, when Tony drew alongside, and held a penny up in his hand to Hackshott for inspection.

" You're a bad penny yourself, you are," said his friend. " Are you wanting to come up ? "

" I have not talked to you," said Antoine. He had suffered a severe penance in having to hold his tongue for nearly an hour with excitement surging in him all the way. Having scrambled to Hackshott's side he discarded umbrella and cape with relief, put his cap in his pocket, and sat bareheaded in the rain, which was still gently falling. He chattered with his usual careless freedom, but he looked rather serious, the groom noticed, and the cathedral spires, now in sight ahead of them, seemed to hold his eyes.

" Are you goin' to service, sir ? " said Hackshott, for the steady sound of the bell was carried to them through the still wet air.

" There is to be a service ? " The boy started rather, and turned to look at him. " But of course, then, I must go." He had been thinking to make for the organist's house ; the idea of a service brought complication he had not bargained for.

" Of course, is it ? " said Hackshott. "And you in the act of misbehavin'." He flicked Bess gently as he said it : Tony failed to take the point.

" That is good to you, religion ? " he asked suddenly after a pause.

" Natural it is, sir," said Hackshott.

" Only Mr. Edwardes is angry when I talk of that," Tony explaind.

" *You* talk to him, do you now," said the groom. " And it's like you, too, to talk of such to the Vicar. What religion was that now, I wonder, you spoke on ? "

" Ours in France—what these call Catholic."

" To—be sure," nodded Hackshott.

" He is curious, Mr. Edwardes. I will tell you. See this cathedral." He flung his hand to the high towers. " That is now an English church."

" So I suppose, sir." Hackshott was cautious.

" Yes, yes ; but that religion made it. When he was talking here the other day he told us that. And he loves this—but he loves not that religion."

The boy spoke keenly : and Hackshott gave him a quick glance.

" And a caution you must be to teach," he reflected. Then he spoke aloud. " You see, Mr. Tony, Mr. Edwardes, he's a churchman. And so, natural, he don't like the mention of foreign churches."

" But why ? " said Antoine. " Religion, there is what churchmen should talk. And yet, when I ask him, he gets up and he walks about like a bear I have seen in the Jardin des Plantes."

" Perhaps he thinks you're too young to talk such subjicks, sir," said Hackshott sagely, flicking Bess's flanks again.

" Oh—young ! " with a whiff of disdain. " Is that not to think, to be young ? "

" Well," said Hackshott, " he wouldn't stop your thinkin'. But there's things you talk of free, and things you don't. And even the thinkin', Mr. Edwardes he'd tell you it should be done at the proper times."

Hackshott had brought up a boy, and spoke with a certain authority. Tony pondered the suggestion.

" Do you think only in the times you want ? " he said, glancing up curiously at Hackshott's brown face.

" I 'as my work you see, sir," said Hackshott. " It's only Sundays I 'as much time for thinkin' ; and even Sundays, 'orses must be seen to. Is it 'ere you wish to be put down, sir ? " he added, as they drove through the arch into the cathedral close.

" Yes. Ah—you hear ? " He caught the coachman's arm tightly as a wave of muffled sound floated out to them from the interior of the great church.

" They're playing the organ," Hackshott pronounced.

" They ? It is *he*. That is all quite right now for me." He drew a deep breath. " Now," he said to himself, " I shall not be afraid."

" What are you thinkin' for," said Hackshott gently, " to be afraid of a church, Mr. Tony ? "

The boy said nothing for a minute, then he spoke low.

" There is a dark place with great arches down below inside. That is not meant to go, I believe, but only for dead people. I would not go there when they went. While he plays I cannot think of that."

The good groom was troubled by him. " He's no right to be off on his own," he reflected, " if he must go thinking all the time." As Tony slid suddenly to the ground he leant down to grasp his collar with a strong hand.

" Hold up a minute," he said firmly. " I starts from the Blue Lion, through the gate there at seven sharp ; an' you come along of me. No runnin' off now and forgettin'."

The boy tried to pull away from his hand. With the sense of freedom tingling and dancing through him, he winced from the very name of the numbered hours. It was cruel of the man to speak of time, Tony thought, when he intended to be happy. His restless look flashed across his captor's face, and Hackshott gripped him tighter still.

" For 'alf of a threepenny," said that worthy to himself, " you'd give us the slip altogether. Unbroke you are and will remain ; they never breaks the like of you. Pull as you wish, though, I've got you. Give us your word, now," he said aloud.

The boy was caught by a sob of pure impatience. " Yes, yes ; I do. Let me go."

Hackshott nodded, released him, and gathered up the reins.

IV

Dr. Hugueson played long after the service that evening, and many lingered to hear him. Gratified as a lazy provincial community always is to get a subject of scandal, the small world of Roxminster had chattered and decried him, some blaming, some feebly pitying the father as the young man's reckless excesses became notorious; yet none the less, during the few weeks that the organist had been absent from amongst them, the devotees of the cathedral had missed a strong force among its influences, to which they had grown accustomed; and this night, the first time he had played since his return, among the many hearing who were stirred and impressed there were a few who felt a pang of remorse in having treated him so lightly.

So long the concert lasted in the darkening church that one by one these casual hearers wandered out, whispering to one another with a smile that the old man had forgotten himself, or had taken to practising regardless of a possible audience. Still supremely in different to their coming or going the shifting strains above flowed on, now melancholy, now triumphant, now appealing, as though not one, but many spirits were at work there, straining the resources of the old organ to their utmost to compass passions which it barely recognised in its sedate life from day to day.

Only one auditor never moved throughout, so small as to be easily ignored in the great spaces of the church. He sat in his corner as motionless as the rapt stone figures about and above him, his head upon his bent arm. Antoine found his eyes superfluous, or possibly troublesome, as the shadows crept round him in the twilight, for they picked out distracting shapes which did not, he knew, exist. His ears, on the contrary, were largely comforted for the hand on the organ keys was masterly, and his instinct had happily led him to a corner where the sound reached him undiverted, without the ghostly echoes which vexed him much as did the dark shapes of which he preferred not to think.

Even when the last crashing chord had faded out he still lay there for a time, unobservant of the fact that the cathedral was now emptied of its last human being, or of the last but one : for Antoine had turned his head on his arm, and his absent eyes were fastened on the organ stairway, not far distant, which led up into darkness. As no master descended it, he must still of course be lurking on high, among the monster pipes which served him. After an interval a boy of the choir came down clattering, whistling between his teeth, but so intent on hurrying home that he did not look at Antoine, though he passed close to him. It was in the midst of the silence which shut down on the departure of this last bit of cheerful common life, that the clash of the great doors closing startled the boy completely awake.

How stupid he was, he thought, gazing round him ; the time at his disposal was slipping fast away, and he had not yet reached the central object of his expedition. Getting hastily to his feet, he discovered to his disgust that he was stiff and cold, and that the place had all grown dark about him. It was a fearfully big place, a cathedral in the dark. As he stood alone in it he felt its great chill hand gripping him. Certainly the sooner he got close to that man who made the music the better for himself thought Antoine.

So in the watchful silence he found his way to the foot of the gallery stairs, where he had once been before, and groped his way slowly up them. Then he waited ; the stillness was so mysterious, so incredible, that he had no sense of human neighbourhood. Had he dreamt that music lately ? The boy leant for a minute on the carved work of the parapet before he dared look round the corner. Then a faint gleam of candle-light encouraged him, a sort of golden bloom on the dark. He crept forward, looked and stopped.

A little old man sat crouched on the organ-seat, his head in his hands. No face at all was visible, but it needed no more than the sight of the hands to make clear to Antoine who he was. He had found the spider—the centre of that web of gorgeous sound he had lately heard : the creator, the controller of all that was here, sitting motionless as a statue of despair before the palace that was his instrument.

Five slow minutes passed, the organist showing no sign of

life to encourage the boy who stood watching him helplessly, longing to approach or retreat, but unable to do either. Then, with a start, Antoine heard a distant clash of keys, steps echoing below and mounting the stairs behind him: the heavy steps of a man. There was no chance of concealing himself even had he had nerve to do so. The boy set his teeth and awaited discovery.

"Hullo," said a man's rough voice, startling the silence. "Here, boy, what are you waiting for? Go about your business, will you?"

A strong hand swung him round. Antoine shrank from the touch. He knew the voice and figure even in the uncertain light. It was Randall Hugueson, his grandfather's former pupil, the spider's son.

"Dr. Hugueson don't want you any more. Should think you could see that," the jarring voice went on. "Here father."

"I told him to go." The figure on the seat did not move. "I thought he had gone, confound him."

"There," said Randall, with a bullying jerk to the shoulder he held. "Now go to the devil, will you, and leave us alone." He let go, and scarce looking to see if the order were obeyed he moved unsteadily towards the sunken figure at the organ.

"Come now. Do you propose to stop here all night?"

There was no reply.

"All the lot below are cleared out," Randall proceeded, "if it's that you're nervous of: no women left to catch you and gush. And there's Curtis waiting to lock up, and Hester getting anxious about you."

A blank pause; then Antoine, who had shrunk back into the shadow of the gallery door, heard the muffled voice again.

"Go away," it said. No more.

"Father, do you know me? Are you ill?" Randall's bullying hand was on his shoulder. Big and burly as he was, it looked as though he could have broken the frail little man at a touch.

"I tell you, go," he said. "What do you want of me now?"

"Why not a tender farewell?" said Randall, with a laugh. "I'm off, you'll be pleased to hear. This place don't amuse me any longer: no one can find anything new to say of me, and money's scarce of late—you may know why.

Hester tells me you've been spending a bit for a change—in London, too, eh ? Pretty thing that, at your age."

The jest fell on silence. The young man was talking at random, half unable to do otherwise, half desirous to excite some response ; but his words fell on ears dulled to jest or to offence either.

" Well, I'm off," Randall repeated, grasping him. " Do you hear ? Here's the key."

He jingled something down on the manuals, then seemed to be going. But glancing back at the bowed figure, some vague compunction took him.

" Here," he said, " shall I send Hester with your drops or anything ? "

Presumably there was a sign of dissent.

" I say, Vidal says your business was all right to-night. He swore you'd never get through, but I backed you, father. I said if you were set on it, you'd do it somehow. You'd a pretty will of your own once, as I told him, though I've got the better of it once or twice of late times, you'll remember. Oh, I shut him up, the little jackal. Our—our family differences are none of his business, anyhow." He gathered himself into the new mood of foolish dignity, for the words were beginning to trip and run together. " But you must take care of yourself, you know. Go in and let Hester see to you. Can't leave you here to the draughts and the rats. The devil ! " He looked fearfully round him, as Antoine's door gave a slight creak. The instant's fear made him furious. " Pah," he went on, with sudden ferocity, his nervious head jerking about watchfully so that the shadows danced. " How I hate it, this great coffin of a place, packed with dead men. And *this*." He struck the organ's dumb keys. " Dead too. Death ! I tell you, it infects the place. What's that music you've wrapped yourself in ? Dead men's bones—dead—men's bones. Music, preached at me all my life—holy, rare, uplifting, ain't it ? Music's made me—look at me ! Music's made you—look at you ! Pish, I'm done with it ; it's a sickly business. Music, as you old ones understand it, is dead. As dead as this wheezy old engine of yours. As dead as——"

He drew up panting ; wiping his brow.

" As I," said the organist, dropping the hands that covered

his face. "You have said it, boy. Now go, if you understand the words I say, and leave me in peace to meet it."

As though unable to face the look turned towards him, Randall swung about, and stumbled with a muttered oath past the door where Antoine crouched. He clutched at it with his unsteady hand as he passed and tugged it behind him as if in fear of something following. The boy, awake to every sound, heard him shuffle blindly down the stair, and the echo of his departing steps.

Even when the clang of the distant door announced him gone, he was unable at once to move, so greatly was he shaken by a passion he had never felt. Then the dizziness of his wrath and terror passed, and sliding from his obscurity, he went straight up to the old man, who had resumed his hopeless attitude again.

"Pardon," he said. "Mr. Hugueson."

The old man jerked his head round, blinking.

"What now?" he snapped. "Is there no peace in this world, even on the edge of the next? Is it you, Blomfield?"

He frowned, dazzled by the light, and peered at the boy.

"No," said Antoine. "That boy went down before. I came up when he went. I wanted to see you, so I waited." His voice died, quivering with fright.

"You heard?" asked the other fiercely. "Little rat, did you hear him?" He gripped the boy's arm.

"Oh, you hurt me," said Antoine. "Yes, I had to hear him, I did not want. Please, you hurt me so."

The claw-like grip slowly relaxed at his cry of pain.

"Why, it's a baby," the organist muttered. "What is a baby doing here? Mad am I? Is it death already?"

He brushed the other knotted hand across his brow.

"Why do you say that?" cried Antoine. "That does not make one dead to play." He frowned up, trying to see his face, with an absorbing eagerness to prove the presence of the thing he wanted. The old man blinked at him doubtfully.

"I played, did I, eh? Then I was alive surely. Good, was it?"

"It was beautiful," said Antoine succinctly.

"He said so, too," Dr. Hugueson murmured. "I dare-

say it was. Well, it was a fine organ, worthy good playing." He gazed drearily at it. " He said it was dead, I think : and music, and me."

" I hate him," flashed Antoine. " It is not true."

" Indeed ! And who are you that says so ? Do I know you ? Are you new to the choir ? "

" I am not in the choir."

" Then you shall be, for you have a voice I take to. Faces nowadays I barely see : but I am used to judging voices. What do you sing, baby ? "

" Nothing."

" Eh ? What are you here for then ? " Again the snarl and the clutch, without any warning.

" I wanted to see you, to—to talk to you." Instinctively, as he spoke, the boy grasped with his free left hand at the cruel fingers on his arm.

" What's this ? " said the organist instantly. " Strings, hey ? That's the fiddle hand, if I know it. Give it here. No, you don't go ! I have you."

He was as passive as a fly in a spider's clutch, as the long muscular arms closed about him, and his hand was seized and explored by those claw-like fingers, that the eyes seemed hardly able to assist. While he did it, his captor went rambling on :

" Why did you not say you were violin ? Odd, it suits the voice. I might have guessed. I said, you know, when he was a boy, anything but the violin : choose anything else. My son's face you may have—so far well : but the voice is wrong. Yet he took it, and I was proud of him. I tell you I was, for a while. It could not last, of course. I have not forgotten the day I went trembling to Lemaure. ' Will it do ? ' I said. ' It may,' he said ; but I saw in his face it would not. That good face of his, the soul of the violin. If you knew it . . ."

" I do," said Antoine, on one sharp breath.

" You know my friend Lemaure ? "

" Yes, yes. I have come from him. It—was so hard to come. It is hard." He threw his free arm up across his face.

" Boy, what are you crying about ? Did I hurt you ? "

"No, no," he gasped. "What you say: what you are."

"Bah, cry for what I was. That is all past. I tell you, I do not care for that now. I believe—I am almost happy. Don't cry, baby, and tell me your name."

"Edgell. Antoine Edgell."

"And he?"

"He is my grandfather. The father of my mother."

"You are Henriette Lemaure's child? Are you lying to me?" A pause. "No, it is the little French voice. I might have known that too." He breathed deeply for a minute more. "And tell me, you play what? The violin, and—this?" He laid his hand on the manuals.

"I have tried. It is not mine."

"But you love it?" he said eagerly.

"After that, I do."

"And you loved that music I played to-night, which he, that other, said was dead? Yet you are a living thing—young." He felt him gropingly. "Younger and more living than he. After all, it is not life he leads. That existence is not life. Perhaps he was wrong. Do you think so, baby?" His voice was eager.

"Of course," said the boy impatiently. "Music is not dead—stupid! This organ is not dead. If I blow it for you, you will see."

"If you blow it—yes, to be sure. I am a pottering old fool. Well, but there was something else, eh? What else was dead?"

"You," said Antoine. "But you are alive."

He looked upwards in the candle-light. The old man's peering, restless eyes met his, and, as though caught by something, he bent his head close to scan him. Then the flash of interest in them faded.

"I am dying, child."

"No," Antoine jerked.

"Hush: I have been in London lately."

"I know."

"You do? Do you know why? To see a great doctor, my last hope of life: a hope as thick as a thread. Well, it is snapped. That is why I played myself out to-night.

That is why I stayed to say farewell." He pressed the organ's silent keys. "Do you hear? Grand, isn't it? No, the breath is out of it—out of me, too, before many weeks have passed. They won't be able to blow life into *me* again—thank God."

He chuckled quietly. He was still playing absently with Antoine's fingers, and his eyes looked strained and wild. The boy in his grasp frowned, puzzled by a crowd of thoughts new to him, but no longer at all alarmed. Having proved the thing he longed to find, he was content. He was sitting now beside the old doctor on the seat, held so tightly that he had no choice but to submit: so he submitted, leaning his head back with a confidence that was more soothing than anything he could have done. For feeling him young and dependent, the sense of protecting crept back by slow degrees to the old man's heart, a feeling he had not known since Randall's innocent youth; and with it came quieter thoughts, with more strength and clearness of vision. When he spoke again it was in another tone.

"Where are you stopping, child?" he said.

"Out at Wainfield—with my uncle."

"Uncle? Not a Lemaure in England? Ah, some one said Lucien was to be in London soon."

"No. I go to him next year. This uncle is brother of my father."

"Humph: Henriette married—I remember the talk. Are they kind to you?"

"Yes," said Antoine on a little pause.

"No," said Dr. Hugueson. "How should they be? There are none in this country who understand *us*. Do you know what they call me here, baby?"

Antoine shook his head.

"Mad. They call me mad. And Randall, that son of mine, encourages them—joins them. Yet he comes whining to the madman for money when he has been living that life of his too fast; and he gets it, too—for what good is money to a madman? Better out of his hands—so Randall thinks. Look up at me, boy."

He studied him again for a minute, scanning every feature with a sort of concentration, in the dense silence which in that

great empty place seemed to contend with trembling human speech.

"It is true," he said quietly, "that I am mad. For those of us who are weak, the name of madness is enough, and we become so. It is strength, great strength, that we need for this life, remember that. I declare, this once to you, baby, that I have fought. With my best strength, with my music—ours"—he gripped the child he held—"I have fought the tongues as I could. But that strength does not last. Another, a deeper one, is needed, which I have not. Boy, when you are near like this, *his* strength comes to me, that you have brought; and I use it to send you away. If my friend had known all, he would not have sent you, for it is no place here for the young—the young and happy." He looked down upon him again for a silence. "I must believe you happy," he said, "for I am not." After another painful pause he finished hurriedly. "Good-night, my love, and good-bye. You have done well to come. Go quickly, for it is hard to part with you."

He bent his grey head down to him once, and then with a curious effort he threw his long arms behind him and clasped them so. Antoine, after a moment of silent wonder, clambered out of his late prison by the organ; and leaving the organist so sitting, with bent head in the wavering candle-light, he slipped to the door, and felt his way fearfully down the dark stairs.

V

ISABEL came in after nine, and coaxed Hal by slow degrees into bed: so that it was late before she mounted the stairs to Antoine's room. She tried the door, but to her surprise it resisted her.

"Are you in bed, Tony?" she asked softly, in case he was asleep. She had almost decided that he was, when he came quickly to the door and opened it: anything but asleep evidently, for he was not even undressed, and very different in appearance, so far as she could see in the dim light, from what she had expected.

"Dear, is your cold worse?" she said hastily, entering. Her practical mind leapt to the most probable explanation of his white face and tearful eyes. Antoine's cold choked him apparently, for he mutely shook his head.

"Throat, is it?" said Miss Guthrie quickly. "Tell me where it hurts you, my dear." She pulled him kindly down beside her on the bed. He struggled and spoke.

"I am quite well," he said unsteadily. "I have no cold at all." But he drew close to her as he said it, for her appearance was solid and comforting: and the terror of the empty dark church, shorn of music, and beauty, and friendliness, as it had been when his grandfather's friend thrust him out into the lower darkness, was still enclosing him. In this loneliness and fear, Isabel would be kind. She had come of her own accord up all those stairs, as was surely clear, to help him.

"Nerves," said Miss Guthrie to herself, greatly relieved that he was not ill. She had a vision of Henry's shocks of sudden illness, the burden of which had frequently fallen on her in her mother's absence. After all, this boy was stronger than he looked; only fanciful and excitable as might be expected of his race. "What did you lock the door for, goosey?"

"Sometimes I do."

"But why?"

Antoine looked at her wistfully through his wet eyelashes. After some time patiently spent, she persuaded him to confess.

"Do you know how that is, to walk about when you dream?"

"Sleepwalking? Never! Do you?"

"Sometimes I have done that, yes. N—not often."

Isabel looked rather serious over it.

"You will not tell her?" he suggested, holding her. "That will not matter, if I lock the door, and put the key away, will it?"

"You mustn't," said Isabel gravely. "It is useless anyhow, and it's not safe." She continued to lecture him for a little longer. "I will not tell mother," she said finally, "but you must give me your key."

He got up, fetched it, and put it into her hand quite simply. The confidence touched her rather, for she had talked assuming that he would make a fuss over it.

"What have you been crying about?" she asked presently, looking down at him with her serious smile.

He dropped his eyes. "Oh, I have not been happy to-night."

"Were you lonely without us?" Tony shook his head, and she smiled anew. He was a funny little boy.

"What did you do with yourself this evening—practise all the time?"

"No," said Antoine. "I did not practise at all."

She tried a variety of questions, but got no answers: he only stared sadly at the candle, leaning against her.

"Is it a secret?" said Isabel at last, much amused by him.

Antoine considered a minute. "Some of it is," said he.

"Tell me the part that is not," said Isabel, determined to be friendly. The more she felt him elusive and hard to approach, the more her reason told her to be natural and homely with him.

"Shall I tell you?" The boy stared up at her in the half-light, noticing how the candle seemed to make a pale crown of light round her soft waved hair. "I should like to tell you about him," said Antoine.

"Whom?"

"The person I have gone to see—this afternoon."

"You mysterious atom," Isabel laughed. "Where have you been—to elf-land?"

"No," said Antoine. "To Roxminster."

There was a pause.

"What do you mean?" said Isabel. Humour, as Hal had observed, was lacking, to regard it as a joke. She was afraid he was lying.

"Inventing fairy-tales, aren't you?" she said, softening her tone to be sympathetic.

"No," said Antoine without moving. "That is true. There was the time, you see, while you were all out; and so I went and came."

"Tony." She dropped her hands off him. Then swiftly with another idea she put one on his brow.

"Are you sure you are quite well, dear?" she said, looking at him closely, for he was hot enough to her touch, and she thought he might be feverish.

He actually smiled in her face. "Oh, if you so wish, I will be ill a little bit," he said, with a movement towards the hand. Isabel had the touch of comfort with which some women are born. The small ministries were with her more instinct than art, though she had practised them much with Henry. That movement of his to her was so like Hal, so babyish almost, that in spite of his odd words and his smile she could hardly believe he was not playing with her.

"Tony," she said, "you didn't really?" He nodded. "But how? How did you go?"

He touched his lip quickly. "The secret," he explained. "I went: that is enough."

It was enough. Isabel pushed him firmly from her, and rose to her feet.

"You went out, when mother had particularly told you to stay indoors," she began.

"It was so hot indoors," the boy murmured.

"I'm serious, Tony," Isabel approached him. "You went to Roxminster on the sly, behind our backs. *You?*" Her kind grey eyes had altered, carried reproach, amazement—almost horror.

"Do—you mind?" he asked.

"Mind? I am sorry: I am ashamed of you."

"Oh no, no," he broke in quickly. "There is not to be ashamed. You see I had to go. Wait, I will tell you about that." She had turned aside with a gesture, but he sprang up and held her eagerly. "There was a man—grandpapa knew him—so I had to know as well. It was because your mother, Aunt Sylvia, did not like him that I could not talk of it, for she would have said not to go. Do you see? I knew she would say it. She hates him—but no, he is not like that at all."

"Tony, stop. For goodness' sake, who is this man?"

"Mr. Hugueson—what you call doctor."

"Good heavens! That old terror!" She stared at the boy. "I suppose he frightened you to death. Well, really, it serves you right."

"*He* did not frighten me," Antoine cried. "He is beautiful, I like him. He was like grandpapa to me, do you see—so that is why I cried. I have thought of grandpapa all to-night since I have come home." His voice broke. "Only that other man with the moustache, and the dark part of the cathedral, where I think he did go down, and because I could not find the door at once when I came out—that was all to frighten me. Isabel!"

Her own name was in pure appeal. But Isabel was herself no longer; the light behind her hair was gone, and her voice had lost the living thrill that had first charmed him.

"Randall's a drunkard," she said briefly. "You have been in bad company: bad, do you understand?—in danger, for all I know. Mother warned you against the Huguesons: I heard her do so. You are not so silly as not to know what she meant. You are naughty, Tony—not silly." She paused. "You have disobeyed mother doubly—trebly," she reckoned. "I am afraid you have been very naughty indeed."

"You will tell her?" inquired Antoine. He asked it more puzzled than perturbed. Isabel dimly perceived that her statement of his enormities had not carried the weight she felt in them. He was sorry to shock her, plainly, but that was all. Was disobedience, she wondered, such a commonplace to French children? She had heard that the custom there did not hold by discipline. But this one was so soft-spoken that she had quite thought he was docile.

"You will tell her?" Tony asked again, drawing his brows together. The idea of his aunt's violence haunted him in prospect.

"No," Isabel answered gravely, and after standing a minute reflecting, she turned and left him.

She did not even say good-night, a surprising thing in her; and she had taken his key, that little metal talisman, which seemed to Tony's fancy to secure him from some at least of the terrors of the night.

"I felt I ought to let you know," said Isabel, her clear eyes on her stepfather.

Huntly frowned. "Oh lor'," he said to himself. "What a bother. I thought he had taken to going easy by now." He tossed his paper aside—in which the speech was well reported—and rumpled up his hair. He could have wished his brain was clearer after his efforts and the enjoyments of the night before. "How the deuce did he get there?"

"He would not tell me. I know nothing but the fact, and his—his so-called reason for going."

"What's that?" said Huntly. She told him shortly.

"Good lord," said Huntly. "I say, don't tell your mother."

"I do not mean to," said Isabel. "In fact I promised Tony I would not."

"What made him tell you?" said Huntly fixing his eyes upon her with some curiosity. His step-daughter interested him as a character, when he remembered to think about her at all, and was not merely content to rejoice passively in her existence. Her presence in his household was invaluable, he had long realised. She cheerfully took upon herself all the awkward jobs that others avoided, she soothed the tempers that her mother jarred, she was quiet and pleasant to look upon. She was, in fact, as clearly created to save bother as he was to dislike it, and he greatly hoped no man would see fit to marry her for some years to come.

"Oh," said Isabel, "I think Tony lets things out before he means to. He was very much worked up. He is a bundle of sensations." Her eyes met his straight. "I do not," she said, "enjoy telling tales."

"Duty," said Huntly with sympathy, "is the most damnably uncomfortable thing. Sorry, Isabel. I feel strongly, you see, because I'm longing to shirk mine at this minute. I am so uncommonly slack to-day. I say! Does the kid know I know?"

"I did not tell him," said Isabel. "You see I did not decide at once to come to you."

"He don't know," said Huntly, and nodded. "Good, I'll make him jump. Don't vex your soul further." He eyed her quizzically again. "I take the whole on myself. The sins of my side of the family are my business, as you rightly surmised." He clasped her arm quite kindly. "I am naturally immensely obliged to you, Bell," he said. "When I think how he might have scored—it's enough to make any serious guardian shudder."

Isabel left him with a sigh of deep relief. She had a shade of her mother's disquiet in dealing with him. She felt strongly at times that they did not see things in the same light. However, she had relieved her conscience of a burden, and she went on to the next thing.

"Hal said you had something for me," said Tony, coming into the study in a hurry.

"So I have," said Huntly, who was sitting on a corner of his writing-table.

Antoine caught his arm. "Is it a letter?"

There was a pause; then Huntly dragged his eyes off the white face so near his.

"No, it isn't," he said bluntly. It was odd how fond the boy was of Jem. He had noticed it more than once, with surprise that held a touch of resentment. He had an absurd liking for old Jem himself, and he had a grudge against the "soulful" foreign gang who had captured him.

"Hands off, please," he added. He wished he would learn how he disliked to be touched.

Antoine's hand dropped off his arm, and he fell back, to his uncle's relief.

"How's your cold?" said Huntly, without looking at him.

"Very well, thank you," said Antoine.

"Came suddenly, too, didn't it?" said Huntly. "Queer things, colds. Case of necessity, no doubt."

The boy frowned at him.

"You never had one at all, had you?"

"Had a cold? Oh yes."

"Don't lie," said Huntly. There was a blank pause.

"You are angry?" said Antoine, quite doubtfully.

"Very. I shall lick you in five minutes—or ten—or twenty." His eyes narrowed up, and Antoine thought of the black kitten. The black kitten had been discovered watching a very young mouse, half-crippled by its paw, with just such a lazy and complacent look. Antoine had killed the mouse and buried it, and sent the kitten to Coventry ever since for its soul's good. He could have found it in his heart to ask his uncle to kill him now; but he only stared at him consumingly.

"Am I like your father at this minute?" inquired Huntly, returning the stare.

"No, not at all. Do not talk of him."

"Shall, if I like. Your father would lick you, wouldn't he?"

"If he was angry, yes. But he would tell me why. And he would not wait." A slight sob caught his voice. "Papa never does wait," he said.

Huntly drew in the corners of his handsome mouth. He felt through the words the grip of his brother's personality, and intensely conscious of himself as he was, it stung him. He rose to his feet.

"Don't excite," he said. "If you really don't know I'll tell you why fast enough. And I won't keep you waiting long. Only I do want to know a thing or two first, if you don't object."

"Yes?" The boy gripped himself.

"I know you were in Roxminster yesterday afternoon; never mind how. I awfully want to know how you got there. It was jolly well done, obviously."

Antoine thought for a minute. "I shall not tell you," he said.

"Right," said Huntly. "Then I shall have to subpœna Hackshott."

"Oh no!" said Antoine, dismayed at the awful word.

Huntly almost rubbed his hands. It had been a shot completely in the dark, but he was "on it." He was grateful anew to Isabel; but for her, not only the boy would have had the laugh of him completely, but also that deplorable fool Hackshott. Now, granted the main disclosure, it was quite entertaining to penetrate the details.

"You came back in the carriage," he said slowly, watching the boy's transparent face. "And you went down"—a pause—"oh, surely you can't have done. You haven't the cheek."

"Yes, I have," said Antoine, who wanted him to be quick. "I went down on the carriage too."

"Behind, eh?"

"In front," said Antoine.

"You're lying," said his uncle, as it were persuasively. "We must have seen you."

The boy ran his hand rapidly into his pocket, and extended a penny.

"You gave me that," he remarked, "when I opened the gate of your friend."

Huntly was staggered anew. "You're immense, Tony," he said. "I've the greatest mind to let you off."

He sat down again on the corner of the table. Really he was the most intolerable person Antoine had ever met.

"What did you give Hackshott to do it?" he asked, after an interval of consideration.

"Give him? Nothing." The boy's colour ran up.

"He must have expected something, you know," argued his uncle, lazily amused at his indignation.

"I do not think," said Antoine, still flushed, "that you know him."

"I certainly don't," said Huntly. "You're right. I don't know my own groom. Nor does my groom know me as well as I should have expected."

"Yes, he did know you," said Antoine, tumbling over his words in his haste. "He wanted not to do that. I—I said it was all right, that you could not know." He stopped and bit his lip.

Huntly smiled. "Hard luck, Tony," he said. "Can't

find the hitch even now, can you? And really, I don't wonder. Well, I'll tell you one thing. Hackshott will know me before night."

"Oh no—do not." He approached again palpitating.

"Oh yes," nodded his uncle. "You've let him in for it this time." He hardly knew the ingenious torment he wielded, or perhaps he would not have pursued it as he did, for some minutes longer. Then something in the boy's flushed face stirred even his habit of fainéantise.

"You're a nuisance," he informed him for the last time, and suddenly rose from the table. "Oh well, then, come along."

A couple of days later two letters reached M. Lemaure's appartement above the Observatory avenue by the same post.

"I write to you in French," said Antoine, "to be more quick, and because Hal will look at it perhaps. I have seen M. Hugueson, and he is what you said. It was altogether beautiful, how he talked and played and looked; only he looked close, not like you, because his eyes are blind like a very old dog. I am not to go back to him, because he says he will die soon. But it is his son that ought to die, and when I heard him talk with that horrible voice, I wished to kill him. You see just now how I am wicked; I am showing you just how I am, because that is more like talking to you.

"Hal is clever to find out things, but his Papa is much more so. Of course he was in Roxminster that day to make a speech as a candidate, and so, perhaps, he saw me. I don't know at all how much he was angry, because you cannot know at once like Papa. Yet if he was not, it was funny to beat me, do you not think? Papa was always quite angry to do that. Uncle Ted looked rather sorry to do it, and tired, because I think he had made a difficult speech. Well, I did not want it! Tell me, do you think I should not mind so much to be hurt if I read about the Saints every day?

"Here I must not talk of the Saints, because they are only in the names of the Churches. They have not even little candles in the Cathedral, though there is a lot of room. Without the candles it is dark in the corners, and you do not

feel as if there were some kind things there. I never have been afraid in ours, except once in St. Etienne that you remember.

"I played those four bars very well yesterday, and that means in a week it will be all right. That is like when Papa runs along to the end of the part he has made, and then gets out to make some more. No, you do not think so, because you do not love properly those engines.

"It was funny Charles Hugueson (*sic*) called me a baby, too, like you. But now I am not that any more, so you shall call me by my name. Do you understand, because I really wish it.

"Will you write quite a little to me *soon*, because I can *not* wait. This is not to be rude, but just the way that writing has to be absurd in what you feel."

Like many of Antoine's in his grandfather's hands, the document was unsigned. Having read it, M. Lemaure turned to the other, which was signed, but harder to read :

"DEAR LEMAURE,—

"He looked at me with your eyes, and brought me peace. But I drove him from me, because I am entered upon the dark ways, and I could not let him walk even one step beside me. Believe that it was hard, for he would have done so. Just for those few minutes he was with me, I felt that I had a friend ; I—who ten minutes before he came had discarded all friendship in this world. Thus I do not curse the world in leaving it, since to the very end miracles have not ceased to happen.

"My strength is passing now, and I dare risk no further words ; but I have enough left as I write to recall the good things you and I have had. With blessing,

"CHARLES HUGUESON."

III NICK

I

THE Schoolhouse at Radfield held its head very high, and was a rock upon which the surging jealousy of the younger houses beat in vain. Worth mention among those it included, at the important epoch with which we must deal, were a promising group of juniors, closely in league, who gave themselves insufferable airs on public occasions; the new headmaster, an individual of great personal vigour and strange tastes—for he seemed to like small boys as much as big ones, and boys in other houses as much as those in his own; and one or two great men—such as young Stagg, who had won a sensational half-mile; and old Gosling, the "heavy-back" of the First Fifteen; and Glenmuir, who hit a "river" boundary twice running in a home match; and Edgell, who spurred the shy Radical minority, and slew Erskine of Bradlaw's with his own rhetorical weapons in open debate. Also, as if such distinctions were not enough, the Schoolhouse roof sheltered "Nick" Archerson, cynic and free-lance, whose curious career with its most dramatic close, gave him a permanent place in the Radfield annals long after the names of his more conspicuous contemporaries had faded into the mists of time.

Not that Nick in his day could be called a popular character, or even a very prominent one. He had not the smallest ambition to be popular, at least. He showed a mighty contempt for the common tattle of school affairs, and a seething hostility to sports. He avoided the herd who loved these things with elaborate care, and asked no more than to be left alone. If "fools" interfered with him, it was their look-out, of course; and as his class of fools included all his contemporaries, most of the Sixth, his immediate superiors, and several of the younger masters, such "interference" more than once resulted in scenes well fitted to be coloured and circulated by industrious legend in the school. Some of the stories were indeed of a breathless nature, for Archerson possessed a violent temper, well in control, and when he forgot himself, always did so most effectively. As to the

matter of mere mental equipment, popular rumour was less interested in that except in so far as it gave him an opportunity of "scoring off" unwary masters in school. "Everybody knew," however (or else "somebody said"), that Alexander himself had a fair copy of Nick's verses framed and glazed in his private room.

Deeply in love with his own society as Archerson always seemed to be, it was quite in character that the only friendship that he ever made was itself in the nature of a sensation. To take into favour a junior and a new boy was unheard of—consequently, it was just the thing for Archerson to do. Nobody attempted to explain it, unless it was Mr. Price.

Mr. Price, the organist and choir-master, had been up to this period the only person with whom Nick had come in contact of his own free will; partly because he had a world beyond the school-world which Nick despised, partly because he was a centre of music, for which thing Archerson exhibited a preference. Price, a cheery little Welshman, equably kind to all, had a way of "jumping at affinities," as he said, in the herd of boys about him; and it was he who first suggested that Nick had his eye on little Edgell, and was shadowing him in the house with quiet pertinacity.

"Freak," grunted Mr. Carmichael, the violin-master, who had dropped in with his cigarette from the adjacent cottage on Sunday evening.

"No," said Price. "With him it's set purpose to do a thing like that. I made the kid play this afternoon just for the fun of it, and Archerson watched him like a boa-constrictor watches a lark. It's an affinity, I tell you."

"Hang your affinities," said Carmichael. "It's sheer freak in a Fifth Form boy to go out of his way for a junior—specially an oaf like Archerson."

"He's a clever oaf," said Price, "and he knows what he likes. And what's more, I'll back him to get what he wants. If he wants that kid, freak or no, he'll have him before the week is out. Archerson's simply the most masterful nature I ever met. He'll do something remarkable—if he lives."

Carmichael was not interested. He thought Price a chatterer, but he had to put up with him as his nearest neighbour.

"You watch 'em," he yawned, "as Findlay watches tadpoles. They're like the tadpoles too, for ever coupling and then whisking apart. You can't really find their habits interesting."

"I do," said Price. "I like their habits awfully. They're far funnier than tadpoles. Besides, there's reason in it; when you've watched 'em a bit, you know just how they'll act. You learn the impelling influence of that particular specimen—like Archerson, for instance. The new types are exciting too. I can't judge little Edgell with safety at present, but I'm getting at him. I know there's a consistency there."

"There's the consistency," murmured Carmichael, "of pure conceit." He curled his moustache in the glass over Price's cottage mantel as he spoke. "He's a little devil, if you ask me. I'm gettin' tired of him. I've not your patience, Price, and I can't sit down and analyse their primal impulses, or whatever it is. I know when they're a bore and when they're not. That's the main distinction."

"And he's a bore?"

"The deuce." Mr. Carmichael was intent on his moustache.

"I ought to have applied to you," said Price. "I forgot you see more of him than anybody."

"Do I? He takes good care I don't see too much. He can't be punctual if he tries, and he'll cut altogether as soon as not."

"He is—irregular," Price agreed. "But he's so sweetly apologetic when he does come."

"I don't care for manners," said the other music-master. "I want deeds."

"Don't he play well enough?"

After a lengthened pause Mr. Price glanced up, and met a very gloomy face. There was resentment in the tone too.

"He plays as well as he chooses, of course. One risks a guess the kid's been used to do as he chooses in all departments."

"I should guess in all departments but that, considering his stock."

"Pooh! the Lemaures know what he's good for, I bet, or they'd never have sent him here."

"Modesty," his colleague commented. But when he

thought the interview over he was not so sure. However, he never probed the " impelling influence " of neighbours on the staff, or, if he did, he never divulged his discoveries.

His prophecies as to the pair of boys, however, came to pass by the most inevitable and natural means.

Archerson was subject to bad colds, and not infrequently dropped out of school life into the secluded one of hospital. He neither asked nor needed sympathy in the matter ; for it was one of Nick's strongest points that he made no fuss about his own delicate health, and he was actually never so happy or so pleasant as in the retirement of convalescence with a book. The hospital nurse and the Schoolhouse matron were perhaps the only two in Radfield who had nothing but good to say of Archerson.

It was under the quiet ægis of " hospital " that Antoine first had speech with him, as follows.

Elliott, a small but self-important member of the exclusive group of Schoolhouse juniors, had managed to put his knee out, and was tied to bed for some days in the first fair opening of the football season. Being bored Elliott summoned his friends to visit him ; and his friends promised warmly to come, but altogether failed to keep the promise ; for the weather was fine, bedside visits admittedly embarrassing, and it was generally more amusing out of doors. Elliott was impatiently expecting one afternoon the arrival of Otway, his chief companion in time of health ; and for want of anything better to pass the time, had been talking a little to Archerson, who was enjoying his last day of seclusion on a sofa in the furthest corner of the room, and had dragged his attention from his book because Elliott's chatter chanced to deal with the freaks of the new boys in his form. The severe nurse interrupted them.

" There's a boy come to say, Elliott," she announced, " that Otway has something to do this afternoon, and can't come."

" Otway's a beast," said Elliott, colouring a little, for he was disappointed. " Who's the kid who brought the message ? "

" A new boy, I think " said the nurse, who came little in

contact with the school, and regarded "cases" more than human beings. "He speaks with an accent," she added, to held Elliott's speculation.

Elliott hesitated, glancing dubiously at Archerson in the corner. The new boy was an "outsider," of course; still, he was badly in need of society.

"Well, he's better than nothing," he said to the nurse. "I might as well have him up."

Archerson was reading again, but he made no objection. He lay like a log with his book all the time Antoine talked to Elliott; but any one observing him could have seen that his eyes were frequently off the book.

Now Tony's social instinct always prompted him to include everybody; and though he chattered to Elliott, he did not entirely lose sight of either Archerson or the nurse. His attempt on the nurse was not a success, though it amused and almost alarmed Elliott; for it was "the thing" to be afraid of her, and she quite succeeded in her apparent object of making illness a distasteful necessity to the Radfield boys. Finding insufficient response in that direction, Antoine presently gave his kind attention to Archerson; and so met Archerson's deep-set eyes fixed gloomily on himself. Nick withdrew them instantly, but the imp in Tony was aroused.

"Chut," he said audibly to Elliott. "One cannot read with such a noise."

Elliott sniggered, but winked at him warningly. Archerson was more dangerous game even than the nurse, the wink signified.

"Play us a tune, Tony," he said, as Antoine laid hands on the violin he had brought in with him.

The boy shook his head. "I must go," he said.

"Do," said Elliott; "Archerson would like it."

"I am sorry," said Antoine to society at large, for Archerson again looked round at his name. "You see, there is Mr. Carmichael, who waits."

"Let him wait," said Elliott. "He must be used to it."

"Oh, yes. But he—how do you say?—swears."

"Do stop a bit, Edgell," said Elliott, who liked his company better than he had expected. "Look here——" He

suddenly dragged him down and whispered privately. His confidence was amusing, for Antoine giggled.

"If he says anything himself," Elliott murmured, "it'll be one to you. If he puts the book down, it'll be two. Go it, Tony."

"But I have no time," said Antoine, audaciously and aloud. "Besides, he reads."

"What's that?" said Archerson gruffly.

"I said only to Elliott—how do I play some tunes when you read?"

Archerson grunted. "I can read through most things," he said.

"That is a nice book," said Antoine, feeling Elliott heave with appreciation.

"It's about the American War of Independence, if you want to know."

"What is independence?" asked Antoine.

"You had better," said Archerson, "read this book and see." After a minute he added, as if he could not help it: "It's a jolly important thing—and it jolly well has to be fought for, always."

Antoine was interested. He forgot Mr. Carmichael, and Elliott as well; pulled himself up from his negligent position, and strolled across the room.

"Did they get some when they fought?" he inquired.

"How ignorant you are," said Archerson, keeping his eyes on the book as he approached. "Of course they did. They're a Republic at this moment."

"Oh," said Antoine, realising the thing. "Yes—so are we."

"We're not!" snapped Archerson, moving his eyes; then—"Oh, you count yourself French, do you?"

"It must be beastly to belong to two countries," observed Elliott. He was lost in amazement at Nick's condescension. But Antoine suddenly thought of his duty, and seized the violin with determination.

"Does Carmichael really swear at you?" said Archerson, betraying that he had listened.

"Not always." Antoine paused thoughtfully.

"I suppose you cheek him?"

" Oh no," with surprise. " I go there to play to him, you see. It is when I play that he generally swears."

Archerson laughed shortly and gazed at his book. Antoine really longed to make him put it down.

" Is that funny—independence ? " he inquired, seeing Nick still smile with his eyes on the page ; and he sat down as he spoke on the end of the sofa in his cool, odd little fashion.

Quite suddenly, Archerson threw the book down and put his hands behind his head.

" No," he said. " If you want to know, I was smiling at *humbug*. What you said about Carmichael just now made me think of it."

" Humbug ? " Antoine repeated the word.

" Know what it is ? " said Nick, looking closely at him. " It's a thing I've studied a bit. A place like this "—he glanced out at the school buildings—" is a ripping place to study it in. If you ever want to know all about it "—he dropped his voice rather—" come to me."

Wherewith, seized with shyness, he scowled violently, and took up his Independence again.

Tony was puzzled by him, but fascinated as well. " The one thing that makes life worth living," Nick asserted, pursuing his subject when he next had a chance, " is to watch the humbugging game that goes on, all round, all the time."

" Don't you like living here ? " Tony asked him.

" Do I look as if I liked it ? Well, I only look what heaps of other chaps feel : but it's the thing to say you like it, and so they pretend. Lot of sheep ! "

" But you like—that." He made one of his swift gestures to the book that was never far from Archerson.

" Work ? I'm like that anywhere," said Nick curtly. " And get as much chance at it anywhere else, and more. Are you soft enough to think you come to a place like this to *work ?* You're a kid, of course." His eyes brooded on Antoine. " Do you like it yourself ? " he demanded suddenly.

The boy winced rather. " I shall perhaps. Papa liked it —my father. And Phil likes it very much."

" Well," said Nick. " I won't say your father's a fool, because I don't know him : and I won't say Edgell's a fool,

because he's not. He's one of the few in the Sixth who's got brains—real brains. But he doesn't trouble to use more than half he's got. Oh yes,"—seeing the boy's look—" I know he's your brother : but I always say what I think. If you don't want to hear what I think," said Nick, swinging his clumsy arms behind him, " you'd better keep out of my way, that's all."

It sounded like a challenge, and a surly one. None could have guessed how the boy's heart was beating as he spoke.

" Yes, they said that," said Antoine thoughtfully.

" Did they ? What else did they say ? "

Tony considered. " You are ill very often," he suggested.

" Well, that's true, as it happens. I catch cold once a fortnight in the winter terms. It's a beastly climate."

" Why do you come here to school ? "

" Because my mother lives not far off," said Nick, " and it's cheaper." He scowled sidelong at the boy. " We ain't got much to live on, she and I. Perhaps *they* told you that."

" No, they did not," said Tony.

" You lie very well," said Nick. After a considerable interval had passed, he gripped him suddenly.

" You'll have to get used to me, you know," he said, rather thickly. " I can't help it. Edgell—I say!" The appeal struggled out, while the other boy stopped to stare at him, " I—I've offended every one in this place worth knowing," Nick went on with a violent effort, " unless it's Price. That's what telling the truth is worth. Either that, or else they laugh at me. Not that I care if they do." He bit his lip. " What I want to ask is—you'll never do it "—in a new spasm of self-torment. " Why should you ? " A minute passed while both stood motionless. " Well, look here—will you play to me now and then ? I'd—I'd do anything I can for you if you would."

That was their acquaintance, and from there it progressed day by day, the whole house its amused audience.

" I give you three guesses," said Glenmuir at teatime to Philip, who had been too much wrapped up in his various offices to attend to the absurdities of the juniors in the house.

" You'd better give me thirty," he said. " If I give you a

list of Tony's intimate acquaintances, you'd begin to understand why."

"Three," said Glenmuir with decision. "Go ahead."

Philip guessed; but though his guesses ranged from the headmaster's female cousin to the ground-man's assistant, he was still able to be startled by the truth. He was also a little disturbed, as his friend soon discovered.

"Confound the young fools!" he said, rising from the table to stand on the hearth. "Is it a fact, I say—or just rotten gossip?"

"Price told me; he's looked on right through. What's wrong?"

"I'd rather it was any one else. I happen to know young Nick better than most. He fagged for me last year."

"Come, Phil. There's no harm in him. It's all pose."

"All you know about it," Philip grunted. Glenmuir at the table was rather amused at him.

"Think he'll haunt the kid?" he said, as he scraped out the butter-dish.

"Well," said Philip, "it's not hard to do it; and"—he paused a second—"Tony doesn't do things by halves. I happen to know him too."

"I wish," Glenmuir observed, "you'd recognise the acquaintance more, Phil. I want to know your kid—every one says he's such larks. But the more I'm in your company, the less I'm in his; I've noticed that."

"He's got to find his feet," said Philip, looking out of the window.

"Rot," said Glenmuir frankly. "He's found them long ago—no thanks to you. It's hard luck on him to do it alone."

"No harder for him than most kids when they come."

"Well," said Glenmuir, "he had reason to expect——"

"No, he hadn't," Philip cut in. "I gave him fair warning."

"Besides," Glenmuir pursued unheeding, "it is harder for a kid like that, and you know it. Why, he can't even talk the language; and it's rankly new surroundings to him—and you admit yourself he's sensitive."

"Not to ridicule," said Edgell with decision.

"To what, then? Neglect?"

" Don't be an ass," said Philip, rather crossly. But Glenmuir kept his pleasant eyes upon him, tilting back his chair : for he had finished eating. They were very close friends, and his own temper was naturally serene : he could bear a vast deal of verbal ill-treatment without winking, for he held proofs of confidence that lie deeper than words. He gauged his friend's ill-humour now as anxiety, and he was not far wrong.

" It's hopeless to choose people's friends for 'em, anyhow," he observed sagely, after a pause. " I don't know if there is anybody I'd back to do it here, unless it's Price. Look at Fanshawe !—and yet he's always trying."

Mr. Fanshawe was a red rag to Philip, and the name served its turn to divert his thoughts.

" Fanshawe's an old granny. He's always wanting to make people ' useful ' to one another. As if you ever liked a fellow because he was useful ! "

" Especially," Glenmuir appended, " on another fellow's recommendation. I say, I really should like to hear Fanshawe's opinion of Archerson."

" I should think," Philip said lazily, " that he prays at night to be delivered from him. Nick, you know, is not unlike Apollyon at his worst."

" Philip ! I say, draw it mild."

" Just what I can't do, as it happens. I can remember more than one occasion when he frightened me."

" I thought he used to impress you rather."

" So he did, when I could get him to argue in cool blood. He's a beastly clever kid on his own lines. You wouldn't believe," said Edgell, " the good things I've heard him say. But in a temper—Lord preserve us !—and Antoine most of all."

II

ANTOINE'S form-master, Mr. Reeves, was a new-comer, young, earnest and untried. As such he was rare material for Mr. Fanshawe, the oldest member of the Radfield staff. In long walks with Mr. Reeves on the moor, Mr. Fanshawe encouraged, suggested, and advised; and withal, laid before his admiring eyes a finished picture of Radfield, its new headmaster, its past good days, and its present more conspicuous characters. Thus Mr. Reeves could chirp airily about the masters' families and the elder boys, before he came into contact with them in person; and had, in his own form, preconceived opinions which successfully delayed the formation of any opinion of his own. He had a quite passionate admiration for Mr. Fanshawe, as a man of humour, penetration and experience, who had conquered by his quiet worth the cranks and prejudices which had led Mr. Alexander—for though Mr. Fanshawe persistently called him the Doctor, he was a layman—to an almost complete renewal of his staff during his first year in the school.

Mr. Reeves took his Second Form seriously, and studied the individual. From the very first the younger Edgell gave him shocks. He did everything that was impossible for boys to do, and nothing that Mr. Reeves expected. He generally answered out of turn, and his answers, right or wrong, were equally surprising. He seemed to think it possible to conduct a conversation with the master from his place in class when the subject interested him, or even to argue when he failed to agree. When he was not interested he did not attend. Worst of all he laughed in the wrong places, and invariably made others laugh when he did so; and, except at a licensed joke about once a week, Mr. Reeves was terribly afraid of mirth in form.

Mr. Reeves—on Mr. Fanshawe's advice—snubbed him once or twice very sharply, and in so doing, to his horrified amazement, nearly made him cry. Certainly he stopped his tongue for at least an hour, but the effect did not last; and

Mr. Reeves went again in despair to Mr. Fanshawe, who smiled.

"Aha, we must make allowances. This is a type of boy you will hardly have met. I, however, have known some thousands—some thousands, Reeves, remember—and I have the advantage of knowing the brother. I will have a talk with my lord to-night."

From the talk Mr. Fanshawe emerged rather gloomy, though he did not disclose even to Mr. Reeves what passed.

"A funny little fellow, oh yes—and a born actor. He needs, I should say, a firm hand. Do you know, Reeves, I often think boys help one another the most. Percy Garett is the head of your form, is he not? I know his good father well. I will have a word with Percy on the subject."

"Edgell's a problem, anyhow, isn't he?" said little Mr. Reeves, cheering up.

Garett, the next person to attack the "problem," was kind-hearted, but shy. He was the youngest child and only son of the rector of the village below the school. Beloved by a doting mother and sisters, it had needed something to keep him simple and unspoiled, and that something he possessed. He had an excellent heart, an exacting conscience, and in notable addition to these, a remarkably good brain. He kept steadily at the head of the form, and was a great favourite of unwise masters; but he was not disliked, which alone says much. Also he did his duty in the state to which Providence had called him, and though hampered by extreme shyness, his good intentions were generally recognised.

He watched Antoine nervously for some time before he found his opportunity. It came one fine autumn half-holiday, when, owing to Mr. Reeves' new *régime* of "firmness," the new boy was kept back to re-write some lesson he had scamped. Mr. Fanshawe, on the field, sent Garett in to fetch him when the stated hour had passed, smiling benevolently to himself over the opportunity for ministry he thus provided.

Garret found him brooding, the tears on his eye-lashes. He seemed slightly surprised at his entrance, but not at all ashamed to be caught crying, and ready as ever to welcome society.

"Got stuck?" Garett suggested.

"No. I have finished."

"Why don't you come out, then?"

Antoine shrugged without moving. Garett looked over his shoulder, and pointed silently to a mistake in the fair copy.

"Literature has only one 't'," he solemnly observed.

"Why?" said Antoine, correcting it indifferently.

"Why? What a question to ask! Because it has, of course, in English."

"In England," said Antoine, with sudden excitement, is 'of course.' But I tell you—to me it is not."

"It's hard luck on you," said Garett quietly. "I've thought so several times. I mean, to have the language bother as well."

The new boy looked round, for the tone was kind.

"You do not think it funny?" he inquired. "I mean, that I cannot speak?"

"Funny—oh no," said Garett, who was seldom amused by anything. "I think you pronounce awfully well, considering; and you can score off us all in French," he added.

"Score," Antoine pensively repeated. He always liked a new word. "See," he added in sudden confidence, with a swift gesture to the page before him, "I can say all that to you, but I cannot spell one word."

"What's the good of learning it by heart?" Garett protested.

"No good; but it is there. I write it twice—the sound is in my head; the stupid sound!" he jerked, and dropped his chin on his hands again.

"That reminds me," said Garett, "I was going to tell you it's better not to say things off by heart in class out of the books. Mr. Reeves doesn't like it much."

"I know he does not," said Antoine, with a visible glint. "But it is right in the book; so he shall have to give me the mark."

Garett frowned, bending to his task.

"You see, it's like this. Kids who learn by heart as easily as you do needn't think at all. Mr. Reeves wants you to think, that's all."

"That's all," Antoine echoed. "Well listen, I am thinking

—a great deal—all the time—sometimes about him." He looked hopelessly rebellious.

"I know," said Garett, sitting down and pushing his hands into his pockets. "It's hard not to think sometimes; but, especially with a master, I think—it's better—*always* to hold your tongue, in the end."

He coloured, for he disliked the position of mentor extremely.

Antoine laughed, inexplicably as usual.

"In the end," he repeated. "You shall be in the end perhaps. I am in the beginning only."

Garett was surprised, and endeavoured not to be offended. He drew off a little.

"Pardon," said Antoine, instantly, on the movement. "I say everything wrong to-day. You see, I feel wrong. I am angry."

He covered his face again.

Garett looked at him. "Don't," he said simply. After a time the little foreigner dropped his hands.

"That is finished now," he observed. "I go to play my violin."

Garett thought he looked pale.

"You must come out," he said shortly. "It's not a day to fug indoors. Besides, you'll get into hot water if you don't show up on the field, because Fanshawe's on the watch. Edgell—I say, do be sensible." He looked entreating, for Antoine let his face express his feeling for Mr. Fanshawe. "You'll be sent up to Alexander soon if you go on like this, and that's no joke."

"I shall like," said Antoine, "to go to Mr. Alexander. It was he said I might practise—because I asked him that."

"He didn't mean in the afternoon."

"Yes. You see, I played in this time the other day. And Mr. Fanshawe came and said I must go out. And I said I may play for one hour when there is not a match: for that is what Mr. Alexander had said when I talked to him. And Mr. Fanshawe, he did not believe it; so I said I would go then again to ask——"

"Ask Alexander? To *Fanshawe?* You never did!" Garett gasped.

"No. I did not go, because he would not let me. He was

very angry," said Antoine thoughtfully, " and red. I do not like him very much. You do, I think ? " he added.

" Well," said Garett, blushing, " he's a friend of my father's, you see. He often comes down with me there on Sunday, He's a very decent sort, really, if you get him the right way."

" Perhaps," said Antoine. " I will see how you do with him, and I will try—perhaps. To-day I have not the time You will tell him ? " he added lightly.

" I'd really rather not," said Garett, much disturbed. Of all indifferent ways to treat a master !

" No ? Then I will," said Antoine, " afterwards."

And before Percy could gather his forces anew, he had risen, chucked his exercise-book on to Mr. Reeves' desk, and gone gaily about his business.

Garett had reason in his wisdom to feel anxious about him : and before a week was out events came to pass that ended in Edgell minor's first formal interview with his headmaster. Mr Alexander was not without warning before it arrived : for Mr. Fanshawe in a state of increasing indignation was not one to be silent on the subject of outrage offered. The crisis arrived as follows :

Antoine was excused French lessons, for after the first two or three attempts, the farce was too much even for the exemplary Mr. Reeves to bear. The boy was naturally enough bored by hearing stories he had known in his babyhood stammered through at dreary length in class ; and when Antoine was bored, he had to amuse himself by other means : which distracted the class and the master alike. So the powers decreed that he should get through his preparation in French hours, and use the evening time so liberated for music.

This seemed at first sight an admirable arrangement, but it did not prove to the advantage of Antoine's prepared work, as his form-master soon discovered. For, as space was limited, he had to do his lessons in a small out-of-the-way classroom, which was used by the staff for such odd coaching as did not fall immediately under the school curriculum ; and such incursions into his solitude were apt to be so enthralling, especially when it was the elder boys, that very little of

Antoine's valuable attention was left for the work he had in hand.

Such were Mr. Johnstone's geometry and dynamics classes, with those clean and complicated diagrams in white chalk, that reminded him of those demonstrated by his father long since with a stick on the smooth Breton sands. Mr. Johnstone, a deep-voiced giant, who had taken Tony's mathematical measure before this in classes with the younger boys, would frequently fain have handed him a question which failed on a slow wit in the Fourth. But he did his duty: ignored him so far as he could, and when his flattering interest became too patent to ignore, turned him inexorably back to his business in the book before him.

All might have gone well had Mr. Johnstone been invariably in charge. Unfortunately, one day it was Mr. Fanshawe, who brought the more hopeless members of the Army Class to the small room to read French plays, and to demonstrate, by the way, his great gift for improving the dullest material.

He was not, when he first arrived, altogether pleased to see Antoine there. He had a theory of him now as "sly"; and he did not find himself quite able to ignore his presence as Mr. Johnstone did, though naturally too secure of himself and his teaching to suspect criticism in a junior. He taught well, as a fact; and what man could do with such unwilling and loutish subjects, Mr. Fanshawe did. His bracing pleasantries rained about their heads, and Antoine listened breathlessly, quite forgetting his history. Mr. Fanshawe corrected their several varieties of accent with patience, and finally read them a speech in his finest manner as a demonstration.

It was a breathing-space for the class, who began to look furtively about them. They had already snatched at the extra person's presence on the scene as a possible diversion from the classical sorrows of Phaedra; now they began to attend to him more than to Mr. Fanshawe, by no means what the master had had in view.

Mr. Fanshawe, soon aware that their attention was divided, grew more irritable by degrees. He controlled himself well though; and since he could not send the small boy out, he had presently a bright idea.

"Edgell," he said. "As you seem to take such an interest in our proceedings, and to be—ahem—in want of immediate occupation, suppose you come and read to us a little."

The measure served some of its purpose at once. The class woke up and showed new signs of life. They were amused—as Antoine was charmed—at the suggestion. He shut his history book promptly, and wriggled along the bench to share a ragged copy of Racine with the nearest fifth-form boy.

For a short time Mr. Fanshawe plumed himself on this new manner of killing two birds with one stone. He had at once disposed of the disturbing element, and given an object-lesson to the class. The boy's clean accent and intelligent emphasis in the verse was a real relief to the ear after the slow mangling it had had to bear at the hands of the heavy young Britons who composed the class. The boys naturally took the whole thing as exquisitely humorous; and the crowning joke arrived when Mr. Fanshawe turned him on to one of Bernhardt's celebrated speeches.

Now, Antoine had heard this on the stage. He had grown excited by the rhythm as he read; and almost in spite of himself he gave the confession the actress's trance-like manner as closely as he could recollect it. It was a clever bit of elocution; but the master, though surprised at first, began to get a little restive before the end, for the boys were giggling. Mr. Fanshawe contained his rising discomfort, and spoke sarcastic.

"Thank you, Edgell. That is very thrilling, certainly. But if I may trouble you, we will have it not quite so quick, and a little less—ah—theatrical."

Antoine lifted an inquiring look upon him.

"If I may say so," said Mr. Fanshawe, primming his lips—"a little less *French*."

The boy's innocent look changed perceptibly.

"You will have it more English?" he asked.

"*Our* emotions, you know, are less obvious to the naked eye. Besides, I wish the class to have time to hear each word distinctly."

Antoine took it in.

"I shall read it again?" he suggested.

"From the beginning, if you please. 'Oui, prince—' Now, my boy."

The invitation so clearly conveyed was irresistible to one of Antoine's natural gifts. He gave the speech the second time deliberately in the English manner, no detail neglected, each word detached, with the emphasis carefully dropped, as he had observed that great nation dropped it. At first he found the accent hard to hit accurately, and Mr. Fanshawe missed the point, and thought he was being clear and careful as directed. But as the boy's mischievous spirit took possession, the caricature became less possible to miss. Antoine had listened to the Army Class French to some purpose; and during that happy five minutes, if the English boys had known, he repaid them in their own coin for much of the mockery from which he himself had suffered since he came to school. Not that the effort had a grain of spite to spur it; it was just instinctive art, apart from all motive beyond the one that urged nearly everything that he did.

Unfortunately, it was bound to be misunderstood by its present audience. Mr. Fanshawe, hearing the stifled delight of the boys, and seeing them glance at him and at one another, had a sudden and awful suspicion. Was it possible—could it be conceived—that he, Mr. Fanshawe of Radfield, was being mimicked? He grew redder and redder, as the speech proceeded, and the suspicion took form. The silence that fell when it came to an end was terrific in import.

Tony looked up, his naughty eyes dancing. He rather thought he had done it well, and he wanted sympathy. But he sought for it in vain in that majestic face.

"You can go to your seat, Edgell," said Mr. Fanshawe coldly. "You will speak to me in my room, if you please, when school is over."

And shortly afterwards the class dispersed whispering.

"His impertinence," said Mr. Fanshawe to the headmaster, "is intolerable. I seldom complain, as you know: but I feel I can do no more than I have done without—ah—overstepping my sphere."

There was an allusion in this that the headmaster recognised. Mr. Fanshawe, though he admitted the excuse of a new young

staff, had never quite forgiven him for arrogating to himself the use of the rod. He considered that in view of his dignity and standing in the school, an exception should have been made in his favour, if in his favour alone; and he alluded to it not infrequently in Alexander's presence.

"Let me understand," said Alexander. "You cannot mean he mocked you deliberately in the face of the class."

"He made it shamelessly clear," said Mr. Fanshawe, fuming anew at the recollection. "I think I can say not one of the boys missed his intention."

"But that young boy—it is incredible. Are you sure, Fanshawe?"

"I was not," said Mr. Fanshawe, clearing his throat, "totally unprepared for it, as it happens. He is a boy—as you must have observed—without a grain of natural reverence. A slight veneer of manners, of course, to deceive the superficial."

Fanshawe paused.

"You will excuse me," said Alexander slowly, "but if it is a personal matter——"

"It is not," said Mr. Fanshawe with indignation. "He upset the discipline of the class, and made my lesson—ah—valueless. I understand from Johnstone that he has had to bear the same when he prepares in that room. He is—er—incorrigibly frivolous, and, I strongly suspect, underhand. One cannot trust him for a moment."

"I suppose you lectured him?"

"I told him what I thought about it, and what in my opinion he deserved. He answered everything I said, and was as impudent as possible." Again Mr. Fanshawe coloured at the recollection. "There was nothing for it but to come to you."

Alexander heard a little more, and then determined to interview Antoine. As a matter of fact, he wished to know exactly what had happened without commentary: and took what he regarded as the shortest way of finding out. Antoine had impressed him in their first meeting as being a variety of things, but underhand was not one of them.

He was startled by the boy's appearance when he came, for he looked both ill and dispirited: altered by degrees since he had last noticed him.

"I am sorry to hear," said Alexander, "that you have been rude to Mr. Fanshawe." Singularly enough, he ignored completely the other charges presented.

There was a pause.

"He told you?" said Antoine, glancing nervously about, as though Mr. Fanshawe might be lurking concealed behind the chairs.

"He told me, yes. It is rare," said Mr. Alexander, leaning his chin on his hand, "for me to have to talk to a junior boy about an offence like that." He looked at Antoine thoughtfully. "It is a disgrace to you that I should have to do so, and an annoyance to me, for I am busy to-night."

"I am sorry," said Tony hastily and sweetly; he advanced a step with eagerness. "See, that need not be very long—for there is not much to say."

"Well?"

The boy hesitated. "He made a mistake, I think. He was so"—he seemed to wince—"so very angry that I could not speak to him. I am like that, do you see, still in English. It is so—so stupid. But I will think now absolutely how that was, and go to him again in his room. And—and you can go on writing." With this proposition, Antoine prepared hurriedly to withdraw. But a firm hand detained him.

"Just come here a minute. Steady on—it's all right. Are you quite well?"

"Yes, I think—only he—he frightens me, you know," said Antoine in swift confidence.

"Fanshawe does? But you propose to go back to him, eh?"

"Yes, I shall go." The boy's voice shook, but he looked obstinate.

"Isn't it easier to tell me? Then I can hand it on—in good English, don't you know. Fanshawe will have more chance to understand."

"You have the time?" said Antoine, relieved. "Oh—if you do not mind. Because I can talk to you."

"I discovered that," said Alexander with a smile, still holding him steadily. "Just the truth, now, because my time is limited to-night."

Antoine nodded comprehension, and considered a short moment before he began.

"They were reading 'Phèdre' all together with Mr. Fanshawe, and he read a long bit to show them how: and when they tried to say it they were so funny. Because McIlwaine was so funny to hear, I listened instead of to do my history. And Mr. Fanshawe told me to read, too, with them. And that beautiful part came with Hippolyte—you know how Sara does it? '*Mais* fidèle, *mais* fier—tel qu'on dépeint nos dieux—ou tel que je vous voi. . . .' I did it like her to show them—for a lark. Was it bad?"

"Probably not," said Alexander gravely. "Go on."

"He did not like Sara, and he wished it all again in the English way. He *said* so." Tony glanced up earnestly. "Of course he did not mean that I should say it like McIlwaine. But—some of the same words arrived and——"

"And you could not resist the temptation. Yes, I understand, I think." A pause, while Mr. Alexander looked away. "That sort of mimicry is dangerous, you know."

"Philippe says so," Antoine agreed. "Generally I do that only for him."

"It is a game. But in school-time games are out of place. Remember that, will you?"

"Yes. He—he laughed when he asked me to read."

"That's true. It was not exactly a lesson for you. But it was for the others, and you disturbed them. That was the mistake."

"Yes," said Antoine again. "Have I been too long?" For Alexander laid hands on his writing things.

"No. I have the facts, I think; and I will lay them before Mr. Fanshawe to-night. You will," said Alexander, "be all the more careful with him in future."

"Of course," said Antoine, frowning intensely.

"What do you propose to do now?"

"Practise, I think. It is the time you said."

"It is later than the time I said. Go—no, that won't do." He reflected. "Go to your brother's room and stay there quietly till tea."

Antoine turned round to look at him.

"I don't think," he said doubtfully, "I know where that is."

"Humph," said Alexander. "Well, other people know. You can ask."

Which resulted very simply in the discovery of Glenmuir, a thing that Antoine was not destined to regret.

"Come in," said Glenmuir, whose feet were reposing on his friend's chimney-piece.

"Pardon," said Antoine, nicely as usual. "Philippe is not here."

"He'll be in directly. Come in and wait."

Glenmuir restored his feet to the floor and shifted his chair. He was decidedly curious to look upon the subject of such widespread gossip in the house; for no event of the least humorous value is secret in schools for long: knowledge of which fact might, in part, have excused Mr. Fanshawe's recent fury.

"We haven't been introduced yet, have we?" he observed.

"It does not need," said Antoine, gently subsiding on to a footstool by the fire. He glanced curiously about the study, which he was allowed to see for the first time. He prepared to take in Lord Glenmuir by the way among other items of furniture; but the expression of the special item was so attractive that he stopped at him a moment.

"Who told you to come?" said Glenmuir at once.

"To come here? Mr. Alexander."

"*What?* Oh, he sent a message to Edgell, did he?"

"No," said Tony. "I do not think so."

"He did," said Glenmuir, "and you've forgotten it on the way upstairs. Never mind, we'll invent another before he comes." He leant forward to warm his hands. "Don't look so scared, he's not really dangerous."

"I am not scared," said Antoine staring at him.

"Didn't he forbid you to come and see him?"

"No. He is not like that."

"Why haven't you come before then? Five weeks, ain't it, since you came?"

"Only that?" said the boy with a quick sigh. "Yes, it is five."

"Well?" Glenmuir prompted him.

"Why I have not come here before? I have not needed to come. I do not need," said Tony quickly, "to-day."

"Don't you? I think you look uncommonly seedy."

Glenmuir considered him carefully. "So that's what he told you, is it? To come if you needed—what? Advice?"

"No. Other people have given that to me; and Philippe said that so it was best, in the first term. He knows very well," said Tony with conviction.

"H'm. Who has advised you up to now, hey?"

Antoine considered a moment. "Mr. Alexander," he began. Then he stared again, because Glenmuir collapsed.

"What's the joke?" said Philip entering. "Hullo—cheek!"

"He has the very best authority for intrusion," said Glenmuir. "He's been consulting with Alexander, and they decided on the whole that you deserved a call."

"I am quite aware where he has been," said Philip severely. "Sent up to the headmaster before the first half-term! I hope you're ashamed of yourself. Is that what you've come to say? (It's nothing to laugh at, Glenmuir, and if you're going to spoil my jaw, you can clear out.) Is it?" he repeated magisterially to the culprit.

"No," said Antoine. "I have come to say nothing; only to stay here till tea. No, don't!" He caught swiftly at Philip's left arm which levelled a cuff at his head.

"Don't be cheeky then. Tony, I say, look here. What did you say to Fanshawe?" He suddenly abandoned the magistrate.

"Don't tell him," said Glenmuir. "He's panting to know."

"He was in a furious wax when he went to Alexander," Philip proceeded to his friend. "Drake met him gobbling like a turkey-cock. It must have been something truer than usual. Come on, kid, let's hear. We won't tell."

Both the seniors looked eager.

"I don't want to think of him," said Antoine crossly. "I did not say to him anything."

"Better tell the truth. Didn't you imitate his French?"

"No," with an impatient sigh. "The French I did was not at all like him. I *told* him it was not. I said I would show him if he wished——"

"You never did!" Philip sank rapturously into a seat. "Oh, you jewel!"

"No, I did not do it, because he did not wish to see. He was so *much* too angry."

"I should about think he was! Did he lick you—oh no, I forgot, he can't. Poor old Fanny, what a jar." Philip sighed. "You're a very naughty kid, you know—shocking. Do us a bit of Fanny's French now till the kettle boils."

"No, I can't."

"Not practised enough, eh? Sara, then: Glenmuir's not heard her."

"I *can't*," with exasperation. "I did not come here for that."

"I advise you," said Philip, relapsing into dignity, "not to speak to me like that."

"He didn't come for advice either," observed Glenmuir. "He told me that before you came in."

"Then he'll get something else he didn't come for instead—pretty sharp, if he don't make the tea."

Antoine did not move. As Philip rose suddenly he swerved back. "But yes, I do want some advice," he protested, holding him off in agitation. "I want to know—I want you to tell me——"

"Well?"

"What one shall do—here in a school—when——" he dropped his head angrily into his hands.

There was a blank pause.

"That," said Philip to Glenmuir, "is generally the end of it. Poor sort of finish, ain't it, to such a jolly day."

But Glenmuir was a tender-hearted youth.

"I was wondering all the time when he would give in," he said, getting up. "Tony—look here—I'll tell you what one should do with a headache. One goes to Miss Fenwick—are you listening?—and asks to go to bed."

"Yes?" said the boy submissively. "Where is that?"

"Up the back stairs by the drying-room. I'll show you, if you come at once."

"Tea's ready," Philip observed. Glenmuir paused.

"Would tea be good for him?"

"Him? I mean you. I shan't wait."

"Brute," said Glenmuir simply; and with a guiding hand on Tony, departed.

"Give Miss Fenwick my love," Philip called after them, "and say I'm beastly sorry that it isn't me!"

The matron had only crossed Antoine's horizon before among the vistas of open trunks and piles of linen on the earliest days of his school-life. He had heard her referred to perpetually, however, as the last resort in all practical questions, even in those of the most masculine description. She was, most simply described, the right person in the right place; and though she was the first of Mr. Alexander's institutions—or rather substitutions—no criticism had ever approached her. She liked boys frankly best of all human beings, and liked them of all ages equally. Yet they could never be completely and permanently dear to her if they were not ill at least once in a way, and so helpless on her hands, which may be the excuse of her weakness for Philip Edgell. He had still enough of his youthful delicacy to be interesting, and he possessed at all times a beautiful knack of taking attention as his due, which especially in illness added to his charm. At all events the preference was acknowledged, by others if not by Miss Fenwick herself. Glenmuir knew well the power of his name.

"Edgell's love, and he sends you this," he said, pushing Antoine forward. "He's not able to come himself, being unluckily particularly healthy. But this is the next best thing he can do."

Miss Fenwick put down her iron, which was filling the small room with the comfortable scent of warm linen, and came quickly forward.

"Had a knock?" she said, taking promptly the most obvious explanation of the younger boy's dazed look. "A ball, was it?—which side?" She put her arm—as strong as Glenmuir's—about him. "Sit down," she commanded, and he helplessly obeyed.

Glenmuir explained that it was not a casualty case. "I gather from Phil that he gets it now and then when he talks too much. In five minutes—no, five seconds," said Glenmuir, sitting on the ironing-table and observing the patient, "he'll find his tongue again."

"The stairs," murmured the boy, whose face was hidden against the chair, "and the very warm room."

"What did I say?" said Glenmuir in triumph. "He can't be quiet long."

Miss Fenwick threw up the window with one hand, and advanced the other in encouragement to Antoine.

"You are Miss Fenwick—that is right?" Antoine put his hand into hers.

"Forgive me," Glenmuir murmured, "I should have presented you. Etiquette is not my forte——"

Antoine glanced towards him frowning.

"If you would not talk—but now I remember. It was to ask you, may I go to bed?"

"Quite correct, darlin'," laughed Glenmuir. "Now it's her turn to speak."

"It may be," said Miss Fenwick. "But she's not going to. If you want to be any use, Glenmuir, instead of a nuisance crumpling my clean collars, you will carry him into my little room. He's not fit to walk a step."

"But I can," Antoine protested, "if you will tell me where——" Glenmuir seized him gently and completely before he could conclude.

"You are very kind," said Tony simply, much surprised to find himself landed in the same painlessly gentle manner on a bed.

Glenmuir sat alongside for a minute. "You'll be all right here," he said, "and to-morrow's Sunday. Thirty hours good before you need begin to bother again." He was silent a minute; the rooks in the headmaster's elm-trees cawed without the gently flapping blind, and a flood of peace descended on the boy's soul, one of the rare restful moments of his life. His impulse was to thank in words again, but he found that he could not for the moment, for bewildered gratitude choked him. Before he could venture to try, Glenmuir spoke again, his leisurely Scottish intonation adding in itself to the moment's inspiration of peace.

"I've often had ideas about Phil's brother; can't help it, you know, when you know him; but I never thought for one single moment he'd be like you. Now I'm going back before that greedy brute has finished all the tea."

And two minutes after he was gone.

III

ANTOINE could adapt himself fast when his heart was in the effort, which is perhaps what James Edgell reckoned in writing so constantly to him to inquire of his old school, of how he fared in it, and to exalt its great days in the past. Tony's faith in his father was greater even than his faith in Philip. That which they cared for, to which they gave such constant tender thought, must be a good thing in itself; and though their happy highway proved a path of thorns for him, his trust in their ultimate judgment failed very rarely—only in the darkest moments of depression that it was his instinct to conceal from all eyes.

There is no doubt he had luck in his generation. He was plentifully "ragged," as was inevitable, unkindly at times, but seldom brutally. The crime of being different from your contemporaries, though it cannot ever be passed over entirely at school, can be condoned in a measure by other useful qualities such as Tony possessed; not to mention the fact that simplicity itself is defeating in the end to such raw minds as those with which he had to deal. Among many a tussle and many a fall, the boy scored some victories that would have surprised himself had he known them: but he was not given to reasoning about what happened to him, taking good or evil as they came, living for the day, and neither expecting nor remembering offences, however much he might suffer from them at the time or after. That suffering he learnt very rapidly to hide, venturing to encounter it only in the few moments of solitude the crowded day left him, or in the waking hours of the night.

His second term at Radfield was, on the whole, the happiest he had. It was the letters of this term that Jem Edgell forwarded with some exultation to his father-in-law; for they spoke to him of good health, good spirits, and the normal life of mild effort and equal intercourse which his reason had prescribed as best in the case.

M. Lemaure might no doubt in simple retaliation have sent

back some of the pages of his own collection, over which he occasionally pondered: but he never did so. He only continued to collect information quietly from both boys, with unfailing interest in a life as far from anything he had ever known himself as a life could be, but the details of which he mastered surprisingly: as his grandsons had reason to discover when they saw him in the holidays, or when his charming short letters answered theirs at school.

Archerson's name was mentioned rarely to Antoine's father—more often to M. Lemaure. When later events came to pass, Jem was inclined to curse the fact that many of the letters were lost or destroyed, in the roving life he led, which could have thrown light on the problem of Douglas Archerson's character and influence on his son. But the whole thing was actually too subtle and difficult for boys of the age of his to write about at all, especially to one at such a distance. Jem suffered negatively for his absence, as often before, no doubt. If he had been there in the holidays to be talked to by Tony, the whole current of a period of the boy's life might have been changed. He wrote with so much more difficulty than he talked—especially in English which Jem exacted—that it was only wonderful the father learnt as much as he did.

It was obviously a curious friendship at the outset, because it was so unequal—"unfair," as Philip bitterly described it later; yet only the most attentive onlooker could realise its full unfairness. Very quietly and lazily Archerson took all that he could get: all that the younger boy's impetuous nature would give him. He used to the full his advantages over him of knowledge, of standing, and of self-control. For in some ways even Nick's temper seemed deliberate. He could throw a black rage over his surroundings when he wished, or when it appeared profitable. He drew Antoine on into heated argument, picked up all the entertainment his supple tongue could offer, and then turned and crushed him with a smile or a scowl. Yet he would not let him alone; the more he tempted him to betray himself, to give himself out by artistic or other means, the more enmeshed he seemed to get in the attraction of Tony and his music—it would be hard to say which was the power that drew him most of the two. He sought him constantly, summoned him—or when he

could do neither, watched him from afar with those deep-set resentful eyes, which had at moments a look of appeal. It was almost as though there was something he desired greatly which the small boy had: some half-hidden hope for whose dawning he waited.

Among those who looked on at the pair, Antoine's brother was one of the few who were not wholly and simply amused. Still, Philip's attitude to Archerson changed a little, as he came to know him better, which he took some small pains to do. Especially in Tony's society, Douglas could be charming; and it was not long before a new attraction came for both the Edgells in the person of his mother.

The first Christmas holidays, though he refused rudely to stay with them, Nick in characteristic fashion summoned Antoine to himself for a few days' visit—for all the time indeed that could be wrung from the very unwilling master who claimed Antoine's holiday hours for music. It was during this visit the younger boy saw Mrs. Archerson first, but though Philip on his return riddled him with questions, he could get absolutely no definite picture of either her or her home until she visited the school next term. Antoine's genius stopped short at personal description always. He could say if people pleased him, or if they did not, and rarely, if ever, changed such an opinion once made; but he could neither discuss them nor give reasons—a peculiarity which constantly annoyed the critical Philip.

He obviously approved Mrs. Archerson, and used his word "curious" about her: an epithet which Philip understood instantly when she came for the school concert in the Easter term. As it happened, the occasion was made memorable to him by a chance contrast so marked as to touch the boy's sense of humour—the touch that has power to define and preserve a memory in certain minds. With infinite arts Philip had cajoled his pretty little French aunt to lend her presence to what was really—since the advent of a musical headmaster—the event of the year at Radfield. He had made use of his brother's necessarily prominent part in the day's doings to urge Madame Lemaure; but he knew perfectly well it was not for Antoine she came. Madame spoiled Philip most flagrantly and would have done far more sur-

prising things to oblige him than bearing for a day the society of "pédagogues anglais" and their wives. She did come, and to Philip's great content, she came alone, though she had declared originally that she would make her husband bring her. But M. Lemaure the younger refused to appear, having at the moment a quarrel with the school. He profoundly disapproved of Antoine's performing in public, and the boy had had a good deal to bear between his guardian's acrid letters and the pressure brought to bear on him by the new society to which he now belonged. His playing was an asset to Radfield naturally, and Radfield asserted its right to make use of him on an occasion like the present. It was the first time he felt powerfully the tug between the two lives he had to lead, a tug recurring afterwards so constantly. It worried him, and though on this occasion his master capitulated, he bore about with him all day the signs of worry, and no small sense of guilt.

"Who on—earth—is that?" It was Madame Lemaure who asked the question. She had been well amused all day, to her great surprise, and she was now engaged in observing society, as it shifted round her on the headmaster's lawn; society observing furtively in return the details of a costume wasted on them, as Madame privately considered; but sufficing to provide, among the female portion of them at least, discussion for weeks to come.

"Philippe, do look quick. There it is again."

"It!" Philip chaffed her.

"Well, but I ask you—woman or man?"

"Be quiet," Philip urged, dropping his voice. "I don't know who she is, but she can hear everything you say."

"Bah—no figure like that ever spoke French," said Madame serenely. "Nor understood it either. There," she proceeded, "it speaks with Antoine now. Who can it be?"

Philip observed the lady criticised for a moment with new attention; then he rose to his feet.

"I think I know," he told her. "I shall make the kid introduce me, and then I shall bring her to you, just to pay you out."

Madame caught his arm with a swift pretty movement.

"Darling, spare me: I cannot. I have borne enough."

"Not nearly," said Philip. "Has she, Glenmuir?"

"He means to pick out the finest freaks of all to come to tea," said Glenmuir, whose relations were abroad, and who was consequently driven to be agreeable to those of other people.

"Never—he will not! Not the pasteur Garett with those big daughters that talk of the football: not the dreadful giant to whose knees I reach." Philip had been trying for half the day to persuade her that Mr. Johnstone's size was not singly sufficient for his condemnation.

"Let me have you alone for tea," Madame murmured, looking up at him, "in that absurd delicious little room where I did not smell the tobacco-smoke."

"Do be quiet," said Philip once more, nearly shaking her, for the headmaster was at her elbow as she spoke.

"I said I did *not* smell it, darling," Madame murmured protesting. "I saw the officers who approached."

"You are going to have tea in my room, if you don't mind," said Glenmuir. "It's bigger than Philip's, you know."

"And why?" demanded Madame. "Because you are one of the English aristocracy?"

"That's it," said Philip. "His relations in coronets are thick on the walls. They had to give him a big room to make the most of them."

"It's not a coronet," said Glenmuir, who had borne chaff unspeakable on the subject of his beautiful mother, whose portrait he refused to move from its place of honour over the hearth, merely because it there became the butt of candid friends.

But Philip, whose eyes had not quitted Mrs. Archerson's remarkable figure, suddenly moved away.

"Why," said Madame, looking round. "He has really gone. I thought he was jesting about that lady."

"You see," Glenmuir explained, "we are all rather interested in Mrs. Archerson, because her kid—her son—is rather a character. He is one of the cleverest chaps in the school."

"Evidently the mother is clever also," said Madame.

"Why?" said Glenmuir innocently.

"The boots—the hat; principally the hat."

Involuntarily the boy glanced at his companion's head.

"You judge that I am imbecile?" said Madame, who could not resist the temptation to tease him. "No! but I will make you observe, there are as many kinds of intelligence as of hats. I speak of women, naturally. Perhaps—" she bethought herself with compassion, "you have not observed them much at present."

"No," said Glenmuir. "I've got no sisters." He was watching Philip's proceedings in the distance too attentively to be aware of her amused eyes upon him. "He is bringing her," he ejaculated suddenly. "I say, shall I take you in?" He swung round to the little Frenchwoman.

Madame considered the question, and gently shook her head.

"Possibly I am curious," she said, "of the kind of intelligence. I prefer to stay."

"Well," said Glenmuir, "if you'll excuse me, I'll go in and make tea."

"Ah? I thought you made the little boys do that," said Madame.

Glenmuir paused, looking in doubt at the advancing group.

"I could send Tony, of course——"

"Antoine?" Madame threw out a hand of protest. "For heaven's sake—*no*."

"He is rather good at it generally."

"But the day of a concert—heavens!"

Glenmuir laughed and went off. He gave, since it has to be confessed, a deep sigh of relief as soon as he was round the corner. Later, as he straightened his room for company, he glanced at least twice at his mother's portrait, and wished that she was there to sit behind his tea-table. But he was as prompt and charming as possible again by the time the company arrived.

The whole party came to tea: for Madame herself politely invited Mrs. Archerson, as soon as they had exchanged half a dozen words. She did not ask Nick; but he came, foreseeing the prospect of what he called conversation, and planted himself on the floor in Glenmuir's window, some way apart from the rest.

At first the two ladies held the talk, and the boys fed themselves and listened well amused. Probably the contrast

struck all of them except Antoine; though he was nearest to Mrs. Archerson, and glanced at them alternately as they spoke. Occasionally something amused him, however, and then he laughed. When he did so, Nick's mother invariably glanced round, as even Madame noticed.

"Do not heed the little boy," she remarked once. "He laughs at nothing always. At how I speak English probably. Since his own is so much better, he has need."

"It was what you said," Antoine protested.

"It was extremely serious," said Madame severely. "I had no need of an impertinent to laugh; now you have quite deranged the answer of Madame, who was about to crush me with a Greek poet."

"If I did," said Mrs. Archerson. "Tony would have cause to laugh again. I know no Greek."

Both the younger boys exclaimed.

"Aha!" said Madame.

"He said you taught him Greek," Antoine suggested.

"Douglas? Perhaps I did once. But by the time I had given what I knew to him, there was none left for myself."

Madame shook her head gravely. "My husband," she remarked, "says one learns more in the teaching, not less: and he has taught all his life. What am I to believe?"

"He teaches Tony, doesn't he?" said Nick, who was gazing at the ceiling above their heads.

"What then?" said Madame quickly. She greatly disapproved of Nick's manners.

"Well, my mother was talking of teaching me. It would naturally be quite different, wouldn't it, mother?"

"Is he flattering you, chéri?" said Madame, lifting her eyebrows at Antoine. He shook his head expressively.

"I don't see at present how you work it out," said the mother over her shoulder to the boy.

"You're precious slow then," returned Nick, and Madame Lemaure stiffened visibly. "If you learn what you teach, it means you go over the same ground pretty often; don't say much for the pupil, see?"

"If you forget what you teach," his mother proceeded slowly, "it says everything for the pupil; for it means the pupil is more gifted than the teacher."

"That's it," Nick approved her. "Now then, which pupil is me and which is Tony?"

"It is quite a pity," laughed Madame, "that Antoine's teacher is not here, for he would undoubtedly have an opinion." Inwardly she was saying piously: "Quelle famille—bon Dieu!"

"Tony doesn't think it's a pity," said Douglas, his lazy eyes resting on Antoine.

Madame's clear, pale skin flushed slightly; Antoine meeting her quick glance blushed too. He was deeply relieved by his uncle's absence as a fact; but he knew also that the fact should be kept from her.

"It seems," said Madame to Mrs. Archerson, having looked him over at leisure, "you have a son who speaks the truth."

"Treason," said that lady quickly. "Not truth. Truth-tellers should learn the difference."

"What is the difference?" Philip asked. He liked what he called to himself her straight play. His aunt was right that she was like a man. She sat in her low chair like a man, her feet firmly planted and her knees apart. Her strong, useful-looking hands were playing with some trifle of paper she had taken from one of the plates, flattening the frill of it with her thumbs as she talked. Her rugged face had barely any claim to beauty, except for certain lines about her eyes, whose frank look through thick fringes added to their charm. They considered Philip now when he addressed her.

"Treason and truth? Something like the difference between giving away public funds, and giving away private property on the sly," she suggested. "Really a thing people ought to know without definitions."

"This is the very old subject," said Archerson, rising on his bent arm. "What people regard as 'private' is mostly *humbug*. It's one of the commonest humbugs there is. People coming crawling to say: 'it's the truth—keep it dark. I say: 'it's the truth—shout it out as loud as possible.'"

"Regardless of people's feelings," Mrs. Archerson appended.

"And if the other people," Madame said gently, "shout your secrets regardless of yours?"

"Let them!" said Nick. "They're welcome to everything *I've* got."

"Then they're welcome to *rubbish*," said his mother, with great and quiet emphasis. As the room was silent in surprise, she proceeded with the same quietness, her queer light eyes shining on those she watched.

"Dear me, yes, I should think so. No private faith—private hopes—private griefs—or renunciations; nothing unformed, unfinished—too delicate to bear the light, too sweet to hear but in the silence. Pitiful, isn't it. Tony?" She threw her hand suddenly to him, as though for support.

"Poetical!" grunted Nick, and dropped down again into his place.

"Is poetry humbug, Archerson?" asked Philip; for his aunt had fallen quite silent, watching the strange people: marking their rough gestures and unmodulated voices.

"*Poetry* isn't, of course. Poeticalness is. Art isn't humbug; artisticalness is. Art and Poetry are the real things—about the only real things in the world. They don't," said the boy gruffly, "need *talking* about at all."

"Why," said Mrs. Archerson, "there perhaps we can agree." She still had a hand on Tony's knee.

"Is it rare," said Madame, "for you and your clever son to agree?"

"Quite rare," she said. "That is how I found this boy so useful. He supports me, now and then."

"Because he's polite," Archerson growled. His expression on the word was wonderful.

"Manners," said Madame, glancing drily at the speaker, "are also rubbish, of course." She longed to add: "it is self-evident."

Mrs. Archerson raised a hand.

"Please don't begin to discuss manners."

"And why not?"

"They are like some other sweet things, pleasanter undiscussed."

"Hush," said Philip. "You'll rouse him again."

He felt he had known her all his life. She was "curious," and he liked her. He agreed completely with Antoine's view of the case.

"I have been told," said Madame Lemaure, "it is the small people in the world who value manners."

Nick gave an involuntary jerk of agreement, for which she seemed to wait before she continued :

" But I observe it is always the mannerless person who tells me so."

Mrs. Archerson laughed aloud, her light eyes vanishing in their lashes.

" Weren't you asking the other day what people meant by *wit ?* " she observed to the boy behind, as if informing him. Douglas jerked again with ill-temper.

" What I asked was—what's the good of it," he said, just not inaudibly.

" Oh, oh," said Mrs. Archerson, looking all round. " That is surely too rude to be borne. Won't somebody answer him ? "

Philip, who had risen to his feet behind his aunt, and was leaning on her chair, had slipped a hand over her shoulder, and Madame openly clung to the hand.

" She's so helpless, isn't she ? " said Philip, looking down at her. " Not a bit able to defend herself—are you, Madame ? Simply awfully in need of assistance—always."

Mrs. Archerson looked at them both curiously a minute, and then gave a quick side glance to Antoine. He had been for him, exceedingly quiet ; Madame Lemaure's presence was alone enough to account for this ; but also, as she had mentioned to Glenmuir, he was apt to be a little odd on days when music was required of him. He had eaten his tea silently and thoroughly—that Tony could be always trusted to do—and exchanged an occasional word aside with Glenmuir, until that gentleman slipped away to his steward's duties in the hall. Since then he had sat still, and any one might have said, bored.

" Where's you tongue, Tony ? " said Mrs. Archerson. " Doesn't the defence of wit appeal to you ? "

" Or the defence of me," said Madame with pathos. " Defend me, dear ; Philippe is too lazy."

The boy glanced at her rather nervously. " I don't know what I shall say," he objected.

" Which means, you were not listening," said Madame. " Confess."

" Yes,—but I think so." His glance moved from Douglas

back to her. "Wit is esprit, yes? It is that you have not it."

They laughed at him.

"Not quite so bad as that," Madame smiled. "Only that the poor esprit that I possess is of no value to the world—or to Mr. Archerson."

"He said it was humbug, perhaps," said Antoine with a bright idea.

"Haven't you been attending at all?" snapped Douglas. "It's not much good coming in if you've not. I never used the word in the connection, as it happens."

"It was so amiable to avoid it," murmured Madame.

"I do not think," said Tony, anxiously frowning, "that wit and esprit are the same. And humbug," he added after thought, "we have not at all in French, I think."

"Thank you, darling," said Madame, gratified, but mocking still. "Really you lift a load from my mind. Voyons!—" she freed her little hand from Philip to demonstrate. "I may still have esprit, though your friend condemns my wit. And humbug I need not have at all, for it is the English speciality. Superb!" She rose dramatically, sweeping her skirts about her. Passing by Douglas in the window, she stopped.

"Humbug is the very, very last thing that is the English speciality," she said softly. "Do I hear you say that?"

"No," said Archerson, colouring deeply. "I said nothing of the sort." He hated to be vanquished in public when he had intended to shine. How dared she speak his very thoughts aloud like this, a mere Frenchwoman, with all her silks and scents about her! Was she not herself the very epitome of all he loved to call humbug?

He threw a lowering look beyond her to Antoine, who had brought up the dangerous word; and Antoine at the look gripped the table, frowning more than ever—for he was well used to Nick's electrical passions by now. Somewhat to his relief, his aunt and Philip and passed out before this one broke. Archerson's grim look seemed to wait for his mother to follow them, but instead Mrs. Archerson sat down quietly on the edge of Glenmuir's table.

"I want to talk to Tony," he said brusquely to her.

"Go on," said Mrs. Archerson. "He is quite ready to be abused. He has a strong position."

"He?"

"Certainly. You were rude to his relations."

"I can't bear his relations," said Nick.

"You could easily have avoided them," his mother returned.

"He can answer for himself," said Nick.

"I am sure he can. But he would be too polite to say that."

"Hang his politeness. He can be beastly rude himself when he likes."

"Not to your relations," said Mrs. Archerson with complete calmness. "If he had spoken to me as you spoke to his aunt just now——"

Nick recoiled glowering. Then, "I shouldn't have cared," he said, kicking the leg of a chair.

"Yes!" Tony broke sharply out. "*There* is the humbug—when you say you would not care."

"Take care, dear," said Mrs. Archerson very low. For the boy beyond looked as if he would have leapt.

"Awfully polite, isn't he?" grinned Douglas. He stood a minute panting in silence, looking them both over with his smouldering eyes. "What's it to you if I care for my mother? You know nothing about it?"

"Douglas!" his mother ejaculated. For a minute the anger leapt in her own eyes to match his. But she retained complete control of herself. "If you do not apologise for that," she said, "I shall have to do so."

She held his eyes for a minute. "Well, he insulted *me*. I'm not a humbug, and he knows it." Then his anger dropped from him as suddenly as a mask.

"Poor little Tony," he said advancing. "Only my way. I beg its pardon, of course." He came up nearer to where the younger boy still stood by the table; but Mrs. Archerson kept between them. She put both her hands on Antoine's shoulders.

"You will have to forgive him," she said quietly, "not only this but many times over; hundreds of times. Are you equal to it?"

The boy looked at her very curiously. His eyes were shy and almost sullen. He did not speak a word.

"Oh, he'll forgive me," said Douglas easily. "That's what kids of his sort are made for. I've said far worse things than that." He appeared almost complacent, yet there was a shadow of suspicion in the watch he kept on her proceedings.

"And as for mothers," said Mrs. Archerson, "if you want to know anything about them, as my boy so generously said just now, I am ready to teach you, Tony. I taught him long ago."

"Shut up," the other boy said, choking. "Leave go this minute." Jealously seemed to illuminate him, as he stood beside them with clenched hands.

"You brought it on yourself," said Mrs. Archerson, rising the next moment. "You never did so more deliberately in your life. Now, leave him alone, please, and come for a walk with me."

Nick followed her sulkily out.

Mrs. Archerson did not see Tony again till the concert hour arrived. He played in the orchestra, in the quartette, and alone; so that his friends saw little of him in private during the evening. The orchestra afforded Antoine much pleasure and amusement, the quartette none at all; in each case on purely personal grounds. Mr. Price directed the orchestra, and at the end of the first week, regardless of lively comment, he gave Antoine's violin the leading position it had held ever since. Antoine's eyes hardly ever left Mr. Price while he played, he found him so pleasing to watch, and ready at any instant to share with him privately the jokes that this remarkable kind of music provided. Mr. Price had also originated the quartette—but unfortunately could go no further than its invention. Mr. Carmichael (who played tenor in the orchestra, led the quartette, and in his proximity Antoine was never less than miserable. Not that Carmichael was unkind; he disliked Antoine as much as ever, but it was some time now since he had been heedful to conceal the dislike, and it very rarely appeared, especially in public. To-night Mr. Carmichael was even festive, and looked remarkably fine, for he had a good presence. He had an air of being very kind to the little boy at his side, which, as they were generally known to be master and pupil, made an excellent effect.

"Are those your people, Edgell? I think they are looking for you."

Madame Lemaure, a radiant vision, had come to the front of the hall, and was seeking pathetically for a seat in the crush about her. Mr. Carmichael found her place with an air, and swung aside two chairs to let her pass. Whereupon Madame's eye invited Antoine.

"This is your master, dear? Introduce me, please. Yes," she confessed to Carmichael. "I had forgotten the long name—awful is it not? But my husband would regret so much if I had not spoken to you. This is a good boy—I hope?" She touched Antoine's shoulder.

"Oh, perfect," said Mr. Carmichael, bending with a twist of his moustache.

"Which means—not at all? Oh, I am in despair." Madame smiled. "My husband thought he might be good at school. He said one made the little boys good."

"We are supposed to," said Mr. Carmichael. "But some cases defeat us, don't you know. Come, Edgell, we're wanted."

"You have very much work to-night?" said Madame with sympathy.

"Pretty well," said Carmichael. "He'll have more, eh?" He glanced again at the boy. "Because he has the solo too."

"Are *you* not playing to us?" said Madame, as he had intended. "Ah, but that is much to regret."

"Nothing to regret," he returned gracefully. "Your nephew will have double my success. On these occasions," he added, answering her laughing look, "one retires in favour of the kids. Sorry I must carry him off, they're waiting."

Madame was content with Mr. Carmichael, and told Philip so.

"Tony rags him pretty well," was Philip's comment; and he added: "Carmichael looks as if he'd like to bite his head off sometimes."

"You have such expressions," sighed Madame. "I found his manner most agreeable."

Philip shut his mouth, and reflected sagely that things might be concealed from the foreigner, even when the foreigner was Madame. Some opportunity of just perception was clearly denied to one who could turn from Johnstone to praise Carmichael. Gloriously secure in his young British

judgment, he did not trouble to dwell on the question, and was soon laughing with her on other matters.

"Now, if you don't see what I *mean*," said Douglas Archerson to his mother, "I'll never think anything of you again."

Antoine had freed himself from the disagreeable entanglement of the Radfield quartette, and climbing the platform at leisure and alone, stood tuning his violin by the accompanist.

"What a treat," said Mrs. Archerson. "I warned you. I know nothing whatever of music."

"Pooh," said Archerson. "No more do I. It's nothing to do with music."

"My dear boy!"

"It's not," said Nick obstinately. "It's something utterly different, I tell you. You'll see."

"If it is, I may have seen it already."

"No, you mayn't," snapped Douglas. "I never did till he played, so you couldn't."

Mrs. Archerson smiled, and lifted her light eyes with curiosity on to Antoine. He certainly looked different, she admitted; but then she had thought him so singularly unlike himself that afternoon. For such a young face, she reflected, it was obstinate, or else she saw his jaw better from below; she looked a little higher and added, haughty. Almost the same moment he caught her eye, and she abused herself for such an absurd idea, for he was ridiculously young and mischievous on the instant. The grand expression was simply acting of course. He had been copying some one whose presence in public he admired. It was like Tony to do it, and like Tony promptly to give himself away on the smallest provocation. He had hardly got his mouth straight by the time he began to play.

"Cool little beggar, ain't he?" said Mr. Carmichael to the Misses Garett. "Regular monkey to teach. Never know where to have him. But he knows how to hit the public, you'll see. Got it in the blood."

The Misses Garett—who were the public—felt apologetic. It seemed almost incumbent on them not to be "hit" in such distinguished society. They were lightly critical of

Antoine, capping one another's remarks with wariness, since Mr. Carmichael proved condescending.

"Who's that old lady in the second row—his mother?"

"Goodness no. The idea of *that* being Edgell's mother." (Miss Connie was one of Philip's admirers.) "Besides, they haven't got one. She belongs to that ugly boy Archerson. She's exactly like him. I saw her with him this evening striding five miles an hour down the Aspendale road."

Miss Grace yawned furtively. "This is the last thing, isn't it? What's he going to play? I've lost my programme. Ask father for his."

"Father's talking to Mr. Alexander," Connie murmured. "I really can't. Mr. Carmichael will know."

"Haven't an idea," said Carmichael when applied to.

"Oh! You're joking."

"Assure you not. He didn't do me the honour to consult me, and I washed my hands of him. He wrote to Lemaure—his uncle, don't you know—so I understand from Price; and Lemaure told him to go to the deuce. Beg pardon, Miss Grace, but it's a fact. Said he wasn't fit to play anything, and never would be. Kid mentioned it quite calmly—not the least put out. Probably thinks he knows a great deal better than Lemaure."

"Now, Mr. Carmichael!"—Miss Constance was giggling—"you really mustn't. She never stops if she once begins. Oh—Mr. Alexander is looking this way."

Mr. Garett's thin saint-like head was turned in their direction. "Constance, my dear, Mr. Alexander is anxious for perfect silence if possible. Will you tell your sister?"

Immediate result—a mask-like gravity along the row having the misfortune to contain the headmaster.

"Well now," said Miss Garett, turning to her neighbour when the strain was relieved. "What was it? I seem to know it ever so well. There now, what's become of Mr. Carmichael? I thought he meant to stop and be jolly a bit." (This in confidence to her sister, of course.) "Can you hear what Mr. Alexander is saying? He's so awfully musical, he's sure to know everyhing."

"The young Lemaure—amazing, isn't it? Yes, that will be the season my father used to speak of—early sixties, wasn't it?—when those very sketches of mine were made. I have them safe somewhere—I'll look them out. Ha, but I

wonder if these boys should see them. It's rank caricature, and I'm sure Edgell adores him—and the little one would be worse. Oh dear yes, absurdly, even now. All his tricks—and the tilt of head—hands—smile above all. Look at him now—how he enjoys it, the little monkey. Well, I must stop those fellows behind—we're later than custom, I think."

Mr. Alexander looked at his watch, and rose, holding it. The noise decreased as he watched the ranks straight and smiling. A very slight shake of his iron-grey head reminded the persistent that encores were not permitted on state occasions—and Tony's admirers gradually subsided. When the very last murmur had faded out he turned and nodded to Mr. Price, and the packed room surged to its feet for the school choral.

Mrs. Archerson passed Madame Lemaure on the way out, and gave her her pleasant smile. Madame was detained by her in the crush a moment.

"You son has abandoned you? Are they not distracting? Philippe has flown too—some duty of gendarmerie. And I to find my way in this barrack alone! Where is yours?"

"Wheresoever Tony is. I shall not see him again." Mrs. Archerson smiled quietly.

"How?—but Antoine is disgraceful. You do not mean——?"

"No, no. I am content, entirely. Douglas has found something to admire, you see. It will last a few hours; but even so it is the greatest good—the very greatest good."

"How strange you are," Madame murmured. "Is it good-night then?"

"Good-bye. I am riding home to-night."

"Riding?" The Frenchwoman absolutely recoiled. Mrs. Archerson smiled again.

"Only five miles—a good road, and perfect starlight. I will catch Philip at the door." Her strong hand grasped Madame's. "Let me have Tony sometime for Douglas," she said wistfully—and went ahead.

Madame's eyes followed her figure thoughtfully, a little puzzled. "Tragic," she reflected. "La haute tragédie. Am I losing my 'flair' in these days, that I could have placed her otherwise?"

IV

It was in the summer term that Archerson ran away, marking a date for years remembered at Radfield. The whole of the events of that remarkable term happened in the last few weeks, and they coincided with the coming of thunder and troubled skies after a long period of remarkably lovely weather.

The origin of many of the difficulties that arose was an unusually weak head-boy. Alexander was perfectly aware, when he put Drake into power, that he set aside one or two better candidates; for in the clever and turbulent Sixth of that year, Edgell and Erskine were both prominent in parties; and Mr. Alexander refused to institute partisan government in Radfield at whatever cost. Philip, being acute, and knowing his youth was against him, never really expected the place, though Glenmuir and others wept over him at Drake's election. He did not greatly want it as a fact, though he knew himself to be an excellent official. He was working very hard for several prizes, notably the Falconer Medal Essay: and though school affairs were certainly interesting, they took a deal of valuable time. He little knew, as he thus consoled himself and his friends, what distraction lay in front of him.

Before the term was well begun, Archerson fell out badly with the younger section of the Sixth. They had been his rivals of the year before, and rose to power at the time when, fighting against much protest on the staff but without the least hesitation, Alexander refused to promote him. Mr. Alexander had a high ideal of his Sixth Form, and he had watched Archerson's character carefully. Also, Nick was very young and very delicate: and in spite of his brilliant work, there was abundant excuse for keeping him back so far as it might be done. Such things can be managed in large schools, even though Archerson knew, and his more fortunate rivals knew, that he could beat them on their own ground, and had done so ten times over.

Secretly the boy revelled in his position of irony, though he

posed as a martyr very cleverly. It did not take much effort to keep his place well in the Fifth, and with all his reserve force he set himself to annoy those just above him in every way he could; and such ways, for Archerson, were manifold.

The troubles of that little world often reached Alexander's ears, and none can say how much thought he gave to it in private. But he was very definite in public, when he had to show their duties to the young stewards of the school. "You are organised with this in view," he practically said. "The offices are filled as well as we can fill them. It is your affair, not mine, and you must work out the salvation of your order alone."

The best of the boys, whose faith in him was singularly firm, strove all they could for unity. But the party cries were started, jealousy continually cropping up, and, on the fringe, anarchy began to cry afar. A boy like Nick Archerson can make much for anarchy, for his tongue has regard to none. Reports of his sayings, sifting down, did harm, for he had strong admirers in the lower school. But his contemporaries of the brainless order suffered most. Epigrams and epithets are so prized by those who find any opinion of their own hard to formulate; and the Fifth Form, seeing themselves in the light of Nick Archerson, began to think themselves very clever indeed.

Nick had Antoine with him again for a week of the holidays, and the discoveries Antoine had begun to make in Nick's mother opened out. Even when his uncle returned from abroad, and he had to leave her and go home, he still turned her over in his mind whenever he was allowed the leisure to do so. Once she wrote to him, and he studied the letter like a curiosity, and kept it, as eventually turned out, for years. There was a degree of the same awakening attraction in Nick himself; sufficient, at any rate, to answer Nick's attraction to him. For as time went on Archerson did not loosen his clutch on Antoine by any means; and what is more, he kept ceaseless watch on his proceedings with others. He varied between almost pathetic efforts to be liked by the boy he had chosen, and vengeful attacks on those for whom he showed a preference. Unfortunately, Tony's acquaintance was wide, and though he made no other close friends, he associated

naturally with plenty among his equals, liked and was liked by many different kinds. But there was no single one of these passing friends—not even excepting the headmaster's dog—that Archerson considered beneath his notice as a rival.

Garett was one of the first on whom, in this apparently mysterious fashion, his resentment fell. Now Garett's association with Antoine was more than half pure benevolence, and less than half natural taste. Antoine, on the other hand, was interested in both Percy and his father to a degree which maddened Archerson. Garett was an admirable butt, and he dealt with him continually, until Antoine was, to tell the truth, a little bored.

"What do you talk about, I should like to know?" Nick demanded once, when Antoine informed him of his intention to go home with Garett for a Sunday.

Antoine was vague. "We talk many things."

"But what?"

"Religion sometimes," said Tony cheerfully. "That is what he likes the most."

"You mean, you let him pour out all that pious stuff to you? I suppose he's making efforts to convert you."

Tony shrugged. He was not very sure what conversion signified, but he was tired of the subject. Garett had told him many things that were fascinating and new to his mind. Garett cherished delightful ideas of travelling in distant lands —plans of which he talked almost with passion sometimes during Sunday strolls. Exactly what he intended to do there Antoine's sympathetic mind had not yet accurately gathered. The attractive thing was the passion itself: those surging feelings which matched Tony's own, and which reconciled him to much that was difficult and peculiar in what Garett said and thought.

"As for the old man," pursued Archerson bitterly, "he's cracked."

"Yes," Antoine assented. "He likes music." He had noticed the two things frequently went together.

"Oh, *that's* it, is it?"

"That is what?"

"Why you are so precious fond of him."

Antoine gazed at him. "I am not. I don't know him much. Sometimes he never talks when I go there: but sits there and forgets to eat. And so Miss Garett spreads him some butter like a little baby. It is curious." Antoine smiled at the recollection.

"How do you know he's musical then?"

"Because Garett says that; and," Antoine added, "I shall play to him to-morrow."

"Aren't you going to wait till you're asked?"

"He will not ask, for he forgets. He is a very sad man," said Antoine, "and he sighs." He sighed himself. "He will like the violin," he finished, "so I shall take it—oh yes."

"You are the rummest kid," said Archerson. "Sometimes I don't wonder people call you conceited."

But he was only diverted for a minute; and he returned to the charge again and again, openly and by more subtle means, striving against the very nature of the boy he had to deal with, and providing inevitably for his own ultimate discomfiture.

It was the same kind of jealousy that led to his broaching his greatest secret to Antoine. Archerson for all his boasted frankness, had a marvellous power of keeping things dark when he chose, and he certainly would not naturally have disclosed his intentions with regard to the Falconer Essay.

Every one knew that he wrote, for anonymous pieces of verse and prose in the school magazine had long been traced to him. Every one also knew that the Falconer was nominally open to the Sixth and Fifth alike, for it had been started in the days when the school was small, and competition far less keen than now; but it was the rarest thing naturally for a Fifth Form boy to enter the lists; and this year the probabilities were more than usually against such entrance, for the *élite* of the school was of the "cultured" order, and rivalry never more eager than at present. That Archerson would have the "cheek" to compete with Erskine and Edgell could never have been suspected by the supporters of either of those superior gentlemen, the said supporters having quite enough to do "backing" their own candidate and pouring scorn on the opposition camp. But his own jealousy was the

one passion with which Archerson could never quite reckon, and it was Tony's most innocent pride in his brother that finally tempted the secret out of him.

The pair were on this occasion watching a cricket-match, on one of those marvellous May afternoons that nearly persuaded Archerson to the beauty of good-humour, and which made Tony inclined to roll on the hot field like a young puppy. The sun and the smell of the short growing grass seemed literally to intoxicate him, and the elder boy used often to grow angry out of doors at his silliness and inconsequence; above all, at that recurrent little chuckle of sheer rapture that seemed to bar all serious argument, and hold it afar like an unwelcome and unnatural thing.

Douglas turned his back on the players, but Antoine watched now and then, for he had given his attention by fits and starts to the game of cricket lately, and was curious to see how the thing should be handled by those who knew. Also, Glenmuir was playing, and Philip, which made the whole affair more serious naturally; and the earnest attention he showed at intervals gave Nick nearly as much annoyance as his frivolity in between. Tony's interest in such things was in Archerson's opinion "humbug." It could not really be genuine, and was probably put on simply to vex him, like the rest of his ridiculous behaviour.

"What's the matter?" he snapped once, as the boy made a little sound of disappointment.

"Not the one more to be thirty," he murmured. "Now perhaps he does not make it."

"Who are you talking about?"

He nodded towards the distant white figures. Douglas glanced over.

"Edgell, is it? You can't see the score from here."

"No, but that is right, I think."

"You've never been scoring," said Archerson with supreme disgust. "I thought you were listening to me."

"I have listened," said Antoine. "I counted between what you said."

"Edgell's nothing of a bat," said Archerson, taking the first charge that came in a hurry. "Glenmuir's six times better."

"Glenmuir is very good, too," said Tony serenely.

"What *do* you know about it?" said Archerson, nearly laughing in spite of his annoyance. Tony laughed too instantly, and collapsed on his back again; for Philip had been caught in the long field, and retired at twenty-nine.

"He can't be so very good as Glenmuir, when he is working all the time," said Antoine presently, eating grass.

"You little idiot. He doesn't play games any less for working. Besides, he's not doing anything very extraordinary as far as I've heard. None of the Sixth," said Nick compassionately, "know what real brain-work means."

"If he works very much," Tony informed him, "then he shall score off Erskine." Antoine, like many of the lower school, took a side.

"Erskine's no good at science," said Nick. "Why don't you talk about what you understand, my little boy?"

"No, no—it is not science; it is the Romantic Revival he shall write," said Antoine, whose memory was safe for such details. Philip had spoken to him of the Falconer subject.

Nick started rather.

"Oh, that rot," he said. There was a pause.

"I shall not put about that in my letters," pursued Antoine, "because he shall not tell papa till he gets it, do you see?"

Archerson laughed grimly.

"He seems to make jolly certain of getting it," he said.

"I think he does," said Antoine. "You see, Erskine does not know so much about French history as him." It was fortunate indeed that the distant Philip could not hear this naïve disclosure.

"Pooh," said Archerson; then—"I suppose you think you're bound to back him, don't you? Suppose I was in for the Falconer, Tony—would you back me?"

"You are not," said Antoine, who was lending some attention to the cricket again.

Douglas considered him a minute with set lips.

"Look here," he said gruffly, "I am going to try for it, as it happens, but you needn't mention it."

The boy swung himself up on his hands and turned. All his attention was Archerson's on the instant.

"You—have written it?" he gasped.

"It's not written, but it's all there. I've read the subject up long ago—French and all." Archerson's lip curled. "Of course, Engell major's a mighty authority—but I don't think he knows more than I do, much." He paused.

Antoine still stared at him.

"Well?" said Nick, sardonically. "Come and back me, Tony."

"But I can't," cried Antoine, "now. Oh!"—he struck the grass. "Why did you tell me?" It was a cry almost of pain, as he dropped prone again with his head on his arm.

Nick put his hand round the back of his neck, pinning him with his fingers. "I shall get it," he murmured between his teeth, "I shall get it. You'll have to back me—I'll make you." The grip of his fingers was almost cruel about the boy's neck.

Presently he desisted.

"What's the matter, Tony?" he muttered. "Don't you see, if I get the Falconer, they can't help promoting me. I won't stand another year in the Fifth—I simply won't *stand* it. I know I'm not as old yet as the youngest of them—the idiots. I know that humbug Alexander will keep me down if he can: find some beastly plausible reason—I know him. They've all got a spite on me. He's made me look a fool for a year—but I'll make *him* look a fool instead, I will. Don't you see, you little donkey"—Nick gripped him again—"how much more important it is for me than for Edgell?—how it's necessary—how it *must* be—how it *will* be? Think of *me*, Tony—me, not him. Why should you think of him?"

The boy stopped, absolutely panting in his eagerness.

Presently Antoine came to life slowly and rose. But he looked pale, with his curious power for such rapid change.

"You will get it," he said simply. "Yes, of course, I know that. But—I am sorry that I know it—that's all."

"You do *know* it, do you?" said Archerson, half in triumph: only half, for he saw where the boy was looking. "Of course," he added pleasantly, "if you speak about it, I shall kill you. I shall keep it as dark as the grave till the lists come out. You'll have to hold your tongue."

The nervous line came into Antoine's brow as he gazed

across the field. He greatly disliked having to hold his tongue. It meant perpetual worry—much thinking—some dreaming, no doubt, as time went on. Why had Nick told him this thing ?

He watched Philip, and thought of him as he had been yesterday, when he had helped him look up some French references in the library, a very happy half-hour, during which he had been honoured by some confidence, and called a useful kid. What was the use now of those pages of beautiful little notes ? Nick would get the medal ; he wished he was not so certain, but there was the fact before his eyes.

So he sat there, while Archerson, once more secure in his mastery, pursued his usual caustic commentary on persons and affairs ; and the sun looked different, and Tony had no wish at all to roll on the field. It was odd how a few words from Nick sometimes could have this transforming effect.

After the match, Archerson demanded to be played to in the gymnasium, as usual on a half-holiday. The gymnasium was a magnificent room for sound, better than the hall, and ten times better than the so-called music-room. Also the veteran sergeant who kept the key was not implacable, especially to Tony Edgell. It only needed to choose the moment, and the right form of persuasion to suit it. But to-day Antoine would neither beg, nor flatter, nor play. He was obstinate, and Nick grew furious with him, and they had something that approached a real quarrel. The strain was as usual far greater on the one than the other, for Nick had the disposition for anger, and Tony had not. He struggled fiercely for a time, but he was easily tired out. Long since Archerson had learnt how to play him, and how to tire him. The victory was always his so easily, that it hardly seemed worth the winning.

The Falconer Essays had to be given to Mr. Fanshawe by July the first. Mr. Fanshawe was acting for Mr. Alexander in collecting the papers, having demanded with rather fussy benevolence to save the headmaster, already overweighted by a multitude of anxieties, the slight added responsibility that the guardianship of the prize essays entailed. Alexander as usual had showed an unccountable unwillingness to part with

the smallest duty which he regarded as under his own department, for Mr. Fanshawe's efforts to "spare" the younger man who ruled Radfield were always, in his opinion, met with the same veiled ungraciousness. The headmaster, when he gave in, explained rather nervously to his colleague the provisions, laid down by the literary founder who was also the judge, which guarded the Falconer entries from publicity. Some names were apt naturally to become open secrets in the school, as Erskine's and Edgell's had done, but the rule stood nevertheless, as a protection to the shyer genius which may be presumed to lurk in large communities. Mr. Fanshawe smiling eternally at the man, promised discretion, and formally received the charge. It became a little hard nevertheless, as time went on, not to talk about his opinions in the matter, especially as his affections became slightly involved. Except the Upper Sixth Form, reserved to himself by Alexander, he taught English in the upper school, and he naturally had his private preferences among the names that figured on the list. These amounted to some half-dozen, including those of the elder boys whose rivalry held the public attention.

Of these, Erskine, a businesslike young Colonial, of whom Mr. Fanshawe was fond, and with whose Imperial and rather sentimental political opinions Mr. Fanshawe found himself warmly in sympathy, brought in his paper early, discussed it in modest fashion with the master, and said he might read it if he cared to do so, which naturally Mr. Fanshawe did. Edgell kept his, toying with it lovingly, until June the twenty-eighth; when he thought it might be more dignified to part with it, and left it, with an air of indifference, last thing at night as he passed Fanny's door on his way to bed. Mr. Fanshawe, who privately considered Erskine's essay wonderful, just glanced at the motto of Hugo that stood at the head of Philip's minute manuscript, and then put it away in some haste. He said to himself as he did so that it was ridiculously long, and that rhetoric for schoolboys was a snare.

The day after that, a half-holiday, Archerson was summoned before the headmaster in the afternoon to answer for an outbreak in a special class, in the course of which he had insulted two of the Lower Sixth, and had been struck by one of them.

Mr. Alexander said that he was only thankful that such

intemperate behaviour had an origin outside his upper form ; and that if Archerson wished to indulge in acts of the kind, it could evidently not be as one of the responsible members of the school ; and that he hoped he would see fit before night to apologise to Jerrard and Horne, and also to the master whose class had been interrupted.

Archerson said nothing at all, but he looked grim when he issued from the interview.

Here indeed was a handy excuse for the great and just powers that ruled Radfield for depriving him of his coveted remove. He had never admitted in full to any mortal, except in those few passionate words to Antoine, how he longed for the comparative freedom which under Alexander's jurisdiction, arrival at the Sixth Form entailed. " Independence " meant a great deal to Nick Archerson, and it was the strongest weapon in the hands of the authority arrayed against him, that they had this liberty to dispose of.

Nick regarded himself calmly as the sworn opponent of humbugging authority ; and the question before him now as he stood and gloomed at his window, the finished essay in his hands, was one of tactics simply. Should he send it in, or should he not ? It was too good for the humbugs, after all. Where was the use of asserting his intellect, the mere skill of thought, after the way Alexander had lately treated him ? Should he abandon the prize ? No one knew of the essay's existence, except Tony, who, Nick suspected, would be only too thankful if he did. He had shown it completed to Antoine some days before, and had teased him with it, for the boy seemed unaccountably to dislike the mention and sight of the paper, shying from the whole subject with a kind of terror which caused Nick both entertainment and gratification. He had then declared pleasantly that he had changed his mind in the matter of competing, that it was too good for the Falconer, and that he meant instead to send it to a magazine, which had already taken one of his anonymous articles. The boy's relief and eagerness were plain to witness, and Nick had mocked his credulity at leisure. He was not quite sure indeed if he had not overdone it a little, for Tony had avoided him since, in a manner which he no doubt considered inconspicuous.

It was true enough that Nick was finding the thought of

parting with the essay hard ; for during the month he had nursed it by him it seemed to have become a part of himself. Beyond this, he had a vast contempt for Mr. Fanshawe, into whose hands he had realised that his offspring would be confided. He knew the rule of secrecy that guarded the competition, of course, but Fanny was such a confounded gossip ! Suppose he should drop a hint that Nick was in, and then Nick should by any chance fail to score. His savage pride and shyness rose against the idea. Really he began to wish he had never thought of trying at all for the wretched thing, it caused him so much vexation of mind.

And then—his eyes dropped on the writing, fruit of such long and secret labour. Ah, but it was good : something warmed him through as he read. Composition was Nick's real life ; inside and outside he never ceased composing ; he scarcely spoke a sentence without preparing it first. Words haunted him, he loved them ; and more the ideas which lie just beyond the reach of words, the ideas to which his brain seemed softly reaching always, as though with delicate feelers unseen.

He could not waste all that—he just could not do it. He must see the look on their faces, hear the headmaster's voice when—after treating the author like a child so long, after rating and ignoring him like one—he had to read his name highest on the Falconer list of the year, over the heads of those precious jewels of his, the Radfield Sixth Form. It would make a difference to his chances too, small doubt of that. Alexander would change front a trifle when he had no longer the rebel Archerson to deal with, but the winner of the Falconer. Yes, it would be a moment well worth waiting for, worth going through something first to reach. As to the apology demanded of him—that might wait over a bit. If he did apologise, it would be at his own time, not Alexander's. He was not going to be tied to hours, like a kid in the Second Form. He was not sure it might not be rather advantageous to submit and lie low, all things considered, till his big effect came off.

Besides, Archerson had an idea he could manage to humble himself to Jerrard and Horne without much waste of pride. He knew them of old, after all : there are ways to do such

things, with fools like that. Nick's eyes glowed, and his lips took the satiric line as he smiled. Fools and humbugs, he could place them all; each had his niche, and Alexander the highest and most prominent. After all, what he had said in class was *true* enough—though the fellows had happened to wish to keep it from the public ear. *What* humbugs people were! His eyes dropped to the paper again. Yes, it should go in, before the hours of June quite ran out; then a few more weeks of waiting, nursing his secret: and then—the glow he had felt mounted to his head—then for the thunder-clap.

At the very word, a rumble of real thunder reached him, evidently from some distant quarter of the heavens, for the sky was clear. The sun shone curiously, though, to-day, Archerson noticed, gazing out. It would be rather odd if the weather broke now, at the very end of the perfect month. He rather hoped there would be a storm, a good one. It would suit his need for excitement very well; and he could tease young Tony, who hated it.

V

"WHAT'S the matter with little Edgell? Has any one been ragging him?" It was Mr. Johnstone who asked the question, entering the common-room that same Wednesday evening, rather late for tea. He addressed the master of the Second Form, one of the two still who lingered by the table.

"Fanshawe was telling us," said Mr. Reeves. "Really a most extraordinary tale."

"Hullo, Fanshawe. You've not been at him again?"

"What do you mean?" said Mr. Fanshawe, who greatly wished some of his colleagues would forget a certain incident, which was really not particularly humorous. "The matter is simply, if you want to know, that the boy's a coward."

"Oh," said Mr. Johnstone. "What's he afraid of—you?"

"It's no joke, really," murmured little Mr. Reeves. He turned with added respect to Mr. Fanshawe. "But the point about Garett is certainly interesting. One always had an idea that Garett was something out of the common."

"The boy has a sort of genius," said Mr. Fanshawe earnestly, "before which, at times, I can only think it right to bow. It swayed me to-day, as I have shown. It may be my weakness—I cannot say. Not your erratic genius—far from that. Something more rare—er, more subtle—ah, infinitely more *quiet*. It makes one think of——"

Mr. Fanshawe would have been in metaphor in another moment, only the lengthy Mr. Johnstone on the hearth turned round. "Garett's a good boy," he said. "Granted. May I have the story, if it's not a bore. I'm getting curious."

Mr. Fanshawe spread himself in his easy chair.

"It's only a little incident, but I find it interesting as character. I was sketching it to Reeves when you came in. I was walking with Garett this afternoon, as I wished to have some quiet conversation with him. We went over Highbury Edge, and came back down the short cut by the quarries. The storm came up so rapidly, you know, that I really thought it might be more prudent not to come through the wood; besides

I was quite in a hurry to get my young gentleman home, as he had no coat: one could not have foretold such a rapid change. The lightning was beautiful from the hill, and it was right overhead by the time we got to the upper gate off the moor. It was just there, below the gate, that we came upon the other boys."

"Who?"

"Edgell minor and two of the Lower Sixth. He was terrified out of his wits, and they were teasing him."

"What was he frightened of?" asked Johnstone quickly.

"The thunder—if you'll believe it. At first I thought the boys had been ill-treating him—Jerrard is rather a bully at times. But it was nothing of the sort. They were simply laughing: and I don't wonder. The boy was almost beside himself with pure panic, you never saw anything like it."

"What did you do?"

"I told them all to shut up and come along for the rain was coming on, and that path soon gets slippery in the wet."

"Well," said Mr. Johnstone, as the narrator paused. "What happened? Didn't he come?" He was leaning his great arms on the chimney-piece, and watching Mr. Fanshawe with narrowed eyes.

"The boy defied me. He simply and flatly refused to move. He used some extraordinary expressions, to which I paid no attention. He has been impertinent to me before now, and there are moods in which I think it best not to notice him—since notice is what he desires. The boys laughed, which did not surprise me. Horne and Jerrard offered to carry him, but I thought it too ridiculous. I told him he might follow or not as he liked, and I took the others on."

"To the farm," Mr. Reeves suggested.

"Yes. It's only half a mile beyond that. I knew Edgell would stop acting if I left him no audience to act to."

Mr. Reeves laughed. "That's good," he said. "I should never have thought of that."

"I know the boy a little," said Mr. Fanshawe modestly.

"Well," said his friend. "Now about Garett. Do go on."

"Garett, Johnstone, was most unwilling to come with us: I could see that. He has the best heart in the world, and

Edgell's hysterics had impressed him. He came on with us as far as the farm, and then he stopped dead. He told me," said Mr. Fanshawe, with slow effect, " that he was going back. Just lifted his eyes, and said it to my face."

" Did he? " said Mr. Johnstone absently. " Surprising."

" It was—for I know how shy he is. It is an enormous effort to him to do a thing like that, and in front of the others. Horne and Jerrard are not a specially safe audience either, and would be bound to talk."

" Did you refuse to let him go ? "

" Of course. I told him he was not to be nonsensical—I was quite severe. I knew what it was well enough ; he has taken so to heart something I once said to him about taking charge of Edgell : long since, when he was quite a new boy, and hardly knew the ropes. But now—his third term—really ! "

" He knows as much as Garett," the form-master murmured, " and a long sight more. *Garett* can't teach him much."

" Just so. Well the rain was a bit less, and when we'd waited ten minutes or so, I thought we had better get on, so I took them out to the gate. *Blest*," said Mr. Fanshawe, with a fist on the table, " if the boy Garett didn't turn right round at the gate, and set off back up the hill. Against my express command ! "

He looked triumphantly at Mr. Johnstone. The point was certainly dramatic.

" Well—I laughed. I couldn't help it. I told the other boys to do as they liked, and I followed Mr. Percy at a safe distance—stalked him in fact. I am really quite curious about the fellow sometimes. He has got hold of some of his father's peculiar ideas—as well as the conscience of a martyr. It was no fun going up. The rain was in my face, and the path as bad walking as I've ever known it. Where the ways divide at the quarries I lost him utterly. It took ever so much longer than I meant kicking and slipping among the stones in that abominable place, before I came upon them at last—both of them."

" Where ? " said the auditor.

" Close to the quarry itself. I had a shock, I can tell you, when I saw how near Edgell had got. I suppose he struck the wrong path, or lost his head or something."

"I thought," said Mr. Johnstone, "you said it was lost when you left him."

"The path?"

"No—his head."

"Oh—don't joke, Johnstone. I'm really serious about this. It was dangerous."

"What was he doing?"

"He was down on his face—crying, I think; and that young saint Garett kneeling beside him."

"Preaching?"

"That's a hard word. Exhorting, I should say: quite the gentlest form of reason. Not but what he said some striking things, in his childish way. I was almost ashamed to stand there listening—a young thing like that." Mr. Fanshawe cleared his throat. "Ah well, he will be an interesting man. He has a steadier head than his father, and quite as strong a will. That—aha!—I proved to-day."

"Did you show up?"

"Of course I did, after a time. It seemed too bad to spy upon them. Besides, the little boy hardly knew what he was saying, and was distressing Percy." Mr. Fanshawe nodded to himself. "Curious business altogether."

There was a pause.

"Did Edgell talk at all," asked Mr. Johnstone, stretching his arms along the chimney-piece and clutching the extreme ends, "about Archerson?"

Both the men turned round and stared amazement.

"How *did* you know?"

"I have known for some time. He has got him on the brain. He is in a highly nervous state, that kid. Did you know he had been walking in his sleep?"

"No!"

"Miss Fenwick mentioned that. She caught him in the passage just awake, and not the least knowing where he was. She said he declared he must tell her something about Archerson, *because* Archerson had said he mustn't. She laughed at him and put him back into bed. That was some nights ago."

"How exceedingly odd," said Mr. Fanshawe. He seemed struck.

"*What* a coincidence," said Mr. Reeves. "Now you really must tell Johnstone, Fanshawe."

"I think I really must." He turned to his colleague. "Edgell told Garett in my hearing that Archerson was entered for the Falconer. He said he *must* tell him, in just the same frantic way. It struck me all of a heap, because I have had no sign of an entry from Archerson. I wonder if the boy's deluded."

"Deluded or not," said Johnstone decidedly, "he ought to be separated from that dangerous boy. It has been increasingly bad for him and if he is not there will be a breakdown. I never saw anything like his looks when he came to me this evening. I've a great mind to go to Alexander."

"Oh lord, don't bother Alexander," said Reeves. "He's had enough to-day with that row in the Lower Sixth."

Mr. Fanshawe knew nothing of the row referred to. Nor did he wish attention diverted from his own incident. He recalled them to it gently.

"I make allowances for Edgell, of course; but there are limits. He does not make the smallest attempt to control himself, and really he lays himself out to be teased."

"Then he was teased?" said Antoine's form-master.

"I don't know. Horne and Jerrard were still hanging about when we got to the farm. But they didn't get at him again, or Garett either—I took care of that. I brought them on with me. They are not," said Mr. Fanshawe, "really bad fellows. I often say the old-fashioned bully does not exist."

"How did the kids get home then?"

"As luck would have it, the cart was coming down. So Mrs. Mowatt insisted on drying the boys—Edgell was sopping wet, of course—and sending them after us. I was glad enough to arrange it so. As it turned out, they were hardly later than we were. I hope they will be none the worse."

The giant on the hearth had no comment, although the story was finished. Mr. Reeves—who was rather elated at having two such characters in his own form—made the proper remarks, and then took himself away.

A short silence ensued on his departure; Mr. Fanshawe sat and speculated.

"I say, Johnstone. Suppose the boy actually means to compete, it would be rather interesting. I may be wrong; but personally, I do not believe Edgell—Edgell major—would

have a chance against Archerson. At any rate, it would be *quite* interesting. There are only a couple of days more ; he'll have to hurry up."

" If it is true," said Johnstone ; " it is a secret, hey ? "

Mr. Fanshawe laughed.

" The secret is out. Quite like that French boy to blurt it out to all comers."

" Hum," said Johnstone, considering. " Miss Fenwick—whom he didn't tell ; Garett—whom he did. Garett is absolutely safe."

He was a little crushing, certainly. Considering his position, Mr. Fanshawe thought, he might pay a little more heed to the form of his words. Size was not everything in this world : though allowance has been made for the blundering of giants before now. Mr. Fanshawe reared his head and folded his lips. " Discretion," he said, " in all departments of school life, is always necessary."

Mr. Johnstone chose to add :

" Especially with Douglas Archerson."

Mr. Fanshawe, passing Archerson's room towards supper-time the next evening, found him just come in and gazing out the window. He paused a minute, then he decided to enter.

" Ha, Archerson," he observed, as the boy swung to him with an unpromising scowl. " It merely struck me to observe in passing that it is the thirtieth day of June."

He had a pleasant, roguish expression, calculated to appease the young bear he addressed. Archerson did not seem appeased. He scowled a little more.

" I—hardly understand," he grunted.

" *Don't* you ? I merely thought you might have mistaken the day, and felt it well to warn you. Excuse," smiled Mr. Fanshawe, nodding brightly, " the intrusion I beg."

As the boy merely stared motionless, after a minute or so the master retired. Really one might hazard a guess that the little donkey Edgell had been deluded after all ; deluded —or raving. However, he had not committed himself. He walked away.

Archerson, left alone, went back to the window.

It was out, then, was it ? He would never tell Tony anything again. He would let him have it, the little sneak. He would get hold of him after supper and tell him what he thought—everything that he thought. He would——

Yes, but the paper had better go in first. Suppose he should be hindered later. Suppose Alexander should summon him. He had not yet "seen fit" to apologise to those fellows, and there was an ominous silence at head-quarters. He rather enjoyed the attitude of rebellion—but still, the question of the essay was serious. That fool of a man was right. He had better take it in at once, and get it over.

He went to his desk, unlocked, opened, and rummaged it. He looked again and again, quite frantically, the dull colour leaping to his face, his pulses thumping heavily. But it was useless to look, for the essay was not there.

Mr. Johnstone and Mr. Fanshawe both stopped to have coffee with the headmaster that evening. Each badly wished the other away, and each tried to sit the other out. Mr. Alexander had hardly leisure to be amused by their tactics, for he was much worried by affairs in the school, and longed earnestly to be left alone.

Johnstone told him about the sleep-walking finally, seeing no other way, and succeeded materially in adding to his harassed expression. He then propounded his theory about Edgell and Archerson simply, and with some ingenuity of phrasing ; at any rate, it captured Mr. Alexander's distracted attention.

"Face them with one another," said Mr. Johnstone, when he seemed sceptical, "and you'll see. It's going too far, sir, I give you my word."

"You are a great bore, vous autres, with your minute observations," said the headmaster. "I don't know which is the worst of the lot of you. I can't lug boys apart when they will get together. It's what Price calls affinities—it's past praying over. Eh, Fanshawe ?"

Mr. Fanshawe did not care for the expression used, but he agreed sedately. The two boys in question were both eccentric and ill-balanced, beyond a doubt.

"But the difference in age," Johnstone protested.

" In some ways Tony's older than his age," said Alexander.

Fanshawe glanced at him with disapproval; he often wished he had more natural dignity.

" I do wish you'd try and see." The giant was curiously persistent.

" What can I do if it is so ? " said Alexander, resting his head on his hand. It is hard not to show impatience at times, but long practice does wonders. " Well, look here. I have got to see Archerson at eight. I'll have the young one down just before and have a look at both of them. Will that do ? "

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" Tell him—let's see—to bring me his Scripture notes at five minutes to eight, sharp. That'll serve. Do you mind ? "

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" Good heavens, no." The headmaster sat back. Mr. Fanshawe's news was most effective. " Good gracious," he went on scratching his chin, " I hope he won't get it. It would be—most inconvenient."

" He has not, at present, sent anything in," Mr. Fanshawe continued. " I still only have the papers of which you know."

" But "—Alexander glanced at the calendar near him—" to-day's the last, surely."

" Just so. It is peculiar. That is why I am inclined to doubt the truth of the report. But I let the boy have a hint, in case he might be wool-gathering. Just enough to poke him up, if it is a fact."

" I hope it's not," said Alexander again, " I am not prejudiced, I believe ; but I had far sooner it were false."

He sat cogitating. Mr. Fanshawe lingered, rather curious. He wondered which of the senior boys who were competing Mr. Alexander was thinking of. It was so significant, his mentioning that he was not " prejudiced." Of course he was known generally to favour his own form : that was notorious. Yet—how extraordinarily stern and fixed he looked.

He had to go finally, for Alexander spoke no more. In a

It was out, then, was it ? He would never tell Tony anything again. He would let him have it, the little sneak. He would get hold of him after supper and tell him what he thought—everything that he thought. He would——

Yes, but the paper had better go in first. Suppose he should be hindered later. Suppose Alexander should summon him. He had not yet "seen fit" to apologise to those fellows, and there was an ominous silence at head-quarters. He rather enjoyed the attitude of rebellion—but still, the question of the essay was serious. That fool of a man was right. He had better take it in at once, and get it over.

He went to his desk, unlocked, opened, and rummaged it. He looked again and again, quite frantically, the dull colour leaping to his face, his pulses thumping heavily. But it was useless to look, for the essay was not there.

Mr. Johnstone and Mr. Fanshawe both stopped to have coffee with the headmaster that evening. Each badly wished the other away, and each tried to sit the other out. Mr. Alexander had hardly leisure to be amused by their tactics, for he was much worried by affairs in the school, and longed earnestly to be left alone.

Johnstone told him about the sleep-walking finally, seeing no other way, and succeeded materially in adding to his harassed expression. He then propounded his theory about Edgell and Archerson simply, and with some ingenuity of phrasing ; at any rate, it captured Mr. Alexander's distracted attention.

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"It is not true, then?" said Alexander, now completely puzzled. The weapon he had planned to use was failing him. He could not use that last persuasion to the rebel, the possible reward of his own great gifts that he was forfeiting.

Nick paused a minute, just to get the effect he wished. "*True?* Whoever said so," he said, his eyes on Antoine, "was inventing—or lying. I have no intention of going in for the Falconer Medal. I never thought of such a thing."

VI

And the next morning he was not to be found. He had often boasted to Antoine that if the worst occurred, he could always run away, and this was apparently what he had actually done, though how and when it would be hard exactly to say. The thrill in the school of course was enormous. It was so exactly like Archerson! That was the first point on which every one agreed. No other in the school was so obviously the one to do it. The term was just beginning to drag a little tamely when he kindly provided this sensation, the best they had ever had at Radfield. The juniors fell on Tony with one accord, and tried to get facts out of him.

But Tony was dull. He said rather feebly that "he didn't know" either why or where Archerson had gone. He was helpless altogether, and restless in the extreme. No one could get hold of him for more than two minutes together; and he looked as if he wondered what was happening and why people were making such a fuss—as if he evidently ought not to have known better than anybody!

"I shall have to protect that kid," said Philip simply to Glenmuir after dinner. "Beastly bore; do you mind having him here?"

"Awfully," said Glenmuir, who was not at all ashamed of his preference for Tony. "I wondered when you intended to send out a rescue party. You're always so jolly deliberate."

"Makeweight," suggested Philip. "It wouldn't do to have two in a family like that, you know."

"You *sound* light-hearted," said Glenmuir, turning round.

"I'm delighted," said Philip with energy, "that Archerson is gone. It's a weight off my chest. I hope, wherever he's gone to, he'll stay there. If he does, we may get things straight before the end of the term."

Glenmuir knew his sentiments well enough—indeed for weeks past he had been spared no commentary. Philip, however much he would have been glad to abstract his thoughts and fasten them on his work, was incapable by

nature of sitting and seeing things go wrong. He took hold of Drake, that vague well-meaning official, and tried to manage him, to shove him along some line of definite action, he hardly minded what. Drake was grateful and resentful by turns : and Philip's enemies took care not to let him lose sight of the resentment. Meanwhile Glenmuir, who was himself in Drake's inner circle, and had, so to speak, a hand on Edgell's collar, was the one buffer between the various parties ; yet even his reserve of good-nature was sorely taxed among them ; and at the present moment, like Philip, he felt he had had about enough.

So his short sight testified.

" It's a bit of a breathing-space," he admitted. " But think of the kid."

" Oh, I'm thinking of him too. I don't believe," said Philip, " that Tony really cares for Nick ; I mean, to matter. Do you, Glenmuir ? " He looked a trifle anxious.

Glenmuir shook his head. " Lord knows. He always seemed to me captured somehow." He paused to consider. " Can't explain," he said frankly. " He'll miss him, that's all I can get at. He'll miss him frightfully. You see, he ain't got anybody else." He regarded his friend serenely.

Philip took a careful shot at his head with the book he happened to be holding, and went downstairs on his quest. After much search he came on Antoine at last in the long grass behind the cricket-nets, which was an excellent place, for the people at the nets were much too busy to attend to him. The headmaster's collie lay alongside, and their four bright eyes looked out with much the same heedful observation of the passers-by. Philip snapped his fingers, though whether to the dog or the boy remains doubtful.

" Come along," he said, and had them both with him in a minute. Having dismissed the collie—much depressed and disappointed —at Mr. Alexander's gate, Tony was told he might come upstairs and make coffee for Edgell and Glenmuir. This was one of his accomplishments, as it happens, so two purposes were served. Coffee—as made by the ruck of fags, or the school cook, for that matter—is not worth drinking : such was at all events Philip's opinion. Antoine's was worth drinking a good deal of, as was subsequently proved.

Both the elders were patiently kind to the little boy, but he was very odd, even for him. Philip asked just by way of experiment, if he knew where Archerson was.

"No, no," said Antoine. "But perhaps I shall." He stared out of the window.

"Think he'll wire?" said Philip satirically. "Now don't be a little fool." He dragged him down on to the chair beside him. "He's cut, and it's the best thing for all parties. Tell the truth now. You were sick of him."

"Oh, no—really."

"No need to be polite," said Philip. "We want to know what you really think. See?"

"Yes, I see." A grave pause. "I think he is not gone far from here, and he waits for me to come. I am to go soon to him."

"If you *dare*——" said Philip, sitting up.

"But I dare—yes!" The obstinate look came to his mouth. "He was very angry, dreadful," he said thoughtfully. "But that is no difference. He has been that before, you see. He will want—that I come." Then seeing Philip raise his eyebrows at Glenmuir, "He *will*," he said angrily. "I am not mad."

"Ain't you?" Down went Tony's head on to his shoulder. "I wish you'd be like other kids," said Philip with a sigh. "It's an awful responsibility to have cracked ones about."

"Specially if they belong to you," said Glenmuir, who was looking on with a certain relief. He knew Philip was clever, but he was always discovering it in new departments. He was plucky too. When it came to the point he did not avoid his responsibilities. Good lord—why was he not at the head of the school at this moment?

"You will get the medal for papa," cried Antoine, twitching himself upon a sudden. "Tiens, I did not think of that." (He spoke French). "Unless——" His face clouded.

"Unless Erskine does," said Philip. "I needn't pay a prophet to tell me that."

"Erskine—bah! Oh, but I wish I *knew*——" He gripped Philip's shoulder, staring out again.

"So do I," said Philip. "Do talk English, Glenmuir can't understand."

Tony glanced quickly at the extra person.

"He is laughing," he observed.

"Well," said Philip, "you are as good as a play, you know. He's not used to it, yet."

"Is it bad to tell a secret?" Antoine desired to know a little later.

"Serious question? All right, I'll see if I can answer," Philip considered. "It entirely depends who you tell it to."

"But sometimes you can't help that. It must go to the person—just who it happens—that it is." Antoine finished the sentence with some care. As usual having got into French he found it hard to get out again. However, Philip had decreed it.

"If the person is nice," he added in rapid confidence, "tant pis, it goes to him. I nearly told you just now."

"Jove!—what an escape." Philip was laughing now himself, chiefly owing to the contagion of Glenmuir. He seldom laughed, though he appreciated a joke; with Tony he could keep his face for hours.

"Shall I guess?" he gibed.

"*Guess* it? Oh, no, you shall not. Please!" He clung to his brother.

"All right, ducky, keep cool. I believe," said Philip, "you ought to be in bed to-day."

"No!" with passion. "In bed, I dream."

"And out of bed you drivel," said Edgell absently. "What's to be done with you?" He glanced out of doors. "Suppose I ought to send him out." He questioned Glenmuir. "It's time, isn't it?"

"Yes, I am going." Antoine was on his feet as Glenmuir took out his watch. "You need not look," he told him, "because I hear them out there—Garett and Meyer and Otway." He stood motionless a minute. There was the faintest confused gabble, as far as the elder boys could hear: but Antoine's ears were convinced in three seconds. He gave Philip a quick smile and vanished—leaving emptiness behind him. At least that was the impression made on Glenmuir.

The search for the missing boy went on. Mrs. Archerson telegraphed that he had not been heard of at home, and arrived herself almost before the telegram. She was very

cool and perfectly businesslike—an enormous relief to the headmaster; for relations on these occasions are commonly the last straw.

The weather had turned raw and squally; a change from high summer to winter such as occurs in England more often than we care to think about. The principal anxiety, shared by mother and doctor, was for the boy's health. He was absolutely careless about himself always: and he had a weak chest, which had been, though unheeded by him, a cause of anxiety at home and at school. Mrs. Archerson told Mr. Alexander quietly what she feared, and why she had reason to fear it. The boy was literally all that was left her out of a family of three; all victims more or less directly of the same cunning disease. She had faced all his life, as she faced everything, the possibility of losing him, her last possession; and the thought only spurred her to greater courage and serenity. She had moved the mechanism that sent him to school deliberately, because she fancied he was beginning to suspect how closely she watched him at home. She had been repaid too for the venture: for with the aid of Miss Fenwick and a clever doctor, the change had done him good, in spite of his railing at the climate. Yet now they were forced to conclude that he had escaped, unprovided with any resources, in the worst of humours, and with a wild district before him. There was no way of issue from a haunting dread as to what imprudence he might not already have commited. If he had been out for one or more of these past nights —the "if" stood unfinished. Mr. Alexander gripped her hand in real admiration, and they both turned to work anew.

Busy as she was, she had barely leisure to notice the Edgells; but, when he could, Antoine saw her. He listened for her voice, too, breathless; and when it came to his ears, calm and cheerful as ever, he slipped away relieved.

Once she came to him unexpectedly, when he was practising, or trying to practise, for the distraction of many mysteries was not good for music.

"You do not know anything, do you, my dear?" she said, holding him in her firm grasp. "You would help me if you could?"

"Oh, yes," said Antoine; adding, after an instant's abstraction, "perhaps I will help you soon."

It really sounded as if he was too deeply engaged with the violin for the moment to do so. Mrs. Archerson showed a gleam of amusement for a moment in the lines round her anxious eyes, before she let him go and went downstairs to her work again.

With Philip she held council once or twice, for his good sense seemed to have struck her; indeed, one or two ingenious suggestions owed their origin to him. But she was away, gone off down the line on a feeble scent which proved to be false, when the next dramatic event occurred at Radfield.

Miss Fenwick went to the headmaster at an unusual hour of the morning, and asked him if he would see Edgell minor, who believed that he knew where Archerson was.

Had he had a communication, Mr. Alexander asked quickly.

Only of a sort, according to Miss Fenwick. He had had a dream. Would Mr. Alexander see the boy; and would he be careful?

Mr. Alexander would do both; and once more he interviewed Tony in his room before the work of the day began.

The boy was absolutely certain—that was all. His story was clear and concise to the point of conviction. They had found a cave, he and Archerson together, he explained. It was not far from the stone-quarries, where borings had once been made for a mine. They had discovered it by chance the last day before the Easter holidays. Archerson had said how easy it would be to store it by degrees with food from the farm, and to live there as a hermit, or preferably a robber. He had invited Antoine to live with him, and had been vexed when he refused. At this minute he was there and he wanted Antoine. If the headmaster did not mind his going first—going at once, in fact—anybody who chose could come afterwards. In fact, they must, because—he thought—Archerson was ill.

"So will you be," thought Alexander, having the first inkling of what lay ahead.

"Certainly you cannot go," he said in the most cheerful

and decided manner. "It is a school-day, after all. You must be in school by nine."

Just a common day, after that night; Antoine realised it, looking at him. It was, somehow, rather a relief. But then—Archerson——

"Can you tell us just where this cave of yours is?" said Alexander with interest. "Then Mr. Johnstone or somebody could go and look." The mathematical master was also present.

"I made a picture," said Tony doubtfully, advancing it. "I remembered when I dreamed, so I made the little picture with Miss Fenwick's pencil when I came to the light."

"What is that cross?" asked Alexander, as the other master leaned over to look. It was a most clean and complete little plan, such as did Mr. Johnstone's heart good to see. The Highbury quarries were clearly indicated, and the paths. A cross marked one spot, and the letter C lay presumably upon the cave.

"That was to help, I thought," said Antoine anxiously. "Where the path goes up to it. Garett will know that place."

"Ah! What did Garett do there?"

Tony hesitated: for this happened to be a hard question to answer. "He said some things there to me—beautiful things. And I——" He blushed and stopped.

"H'm. Garett will be in school too, unfortunately. Does anybody else know it?"

A pause. "Mr. Fanshawe."

"Oh," said Johnstone. "It was that occasion, was it? Were you making for the caves that day?"

Antoine blushed again. "Yes, yes; because of the thunder. The cave would have been a dark place, but I couldn't get so far."

"I see. Well, Fanshawe will find it for us." Johnstone turned to the headmaster, pocketing the little paper. They both looked singularly hopeful, Tony was glad to see; but, then, they were both extremely sensible people.

His eye travelled up Mr. Johnstone.

"Well," said the giant, looking down.

"You could lift him up and carry him, I think? Nick, I mean."

"Rather," said Johnstone. "Two of him."

"Will you bring him back here?" His security was quite infectious, really.

"Well, come to think of it——" Johnstone glanced at Alexander. "Might as well take him home from there—if he is really—— Beg your pardon, Tony," he added, with a laugh; then, turning serious on a sudden: "Shall I take him any message?"

Both the men waited curiously.

"No, thank you," said Tony, reflecting. "That is rather far away to talk." He looked out to where Highbury Edge rose against the grey morning sky above the playing field and the trees.

"Well, shall I bring a message to you?"

Fear sprang clear in the boy's eyes as he turned about.

"I think—you will have to," he said hurriedly, dropping his voice. "I mean—that is not finished yet."

It sent a swift, odd suggestion into Johnstone's mind. He must have looked exactly so on the day of the thunderstorm, when Percy Garett said "beautiful" things to him, and Fanshawe called him a coward.

"I tell you they have," said Elliott before school to an audience in the Second Form. "Fanshawe was fussing round like anything, and Phipps saw Dr. Robinson talking to him, which must mean something pretty bad; and they've taken ropes and pick-axes; and they've gone in that direction."

"What do they want pick-axes for?" asked Meyer.

"Don't be a fool," said everybody.

"But I mean, if he has fallen down the quarry, you wouldn't——"

"Shut up," said Elliott. "What should they fasten a rope to, if it wasn't a pick-axe stuck in the ground?"

Meyer was crushed.

"It would have to be a jolly strong pick-axe, if Fanshawe went down," said Otway absently. He was trying, against odds, to do his geometry, left unfinished by an oversight the night before, in the few minutes before school. "Look here, Elliott. If I produce DA, and drop a perpendicular on it from this top corner B——"

"I say," Elliott interrupted, "if you *can* produce DA, you'd better go and tell his mater so."

"Funny ass," said Otway crossly. "I do wish you kids would hold your jaw. I must get this done for Johnstone before the bell."

"Hope Johnstone will like it, I'm sure," said Elliott, giving a cursory glance to Otway's laborious diagram. "A jolly mess you've made of it. Why don't you ask young Edgell?"

"I thought," said Meyer, "we weren't supposed to write anything before school."

Everybody squashed Meyer.

"You're getting as bad as Garett," said Otway. "I say, young Meyer, keep a look-out for Garett, will you? I don't want him spoiling my fun. Dash it, where has that kid Tony got to? Just when he might be some good, he's never there."

"Here's Reeves coming," announced Meyer in an awful whisper.

Otway laid down his pen at once. He was merely studying his geometry book carelessly when the form-master entered.

"I say, Elliott," he said loudly, to fill the suspicious silence, "do tell us; have you produced DA?"

"If you have done so, Elliott," said Mr. Reeves, "I am sure the police will be grateful."

Everybody laughed. The joke had been made, of course; but it was very clever and kind of Mr. Reeves to make it, all the same. Mr. Reeves looked quite gay, for he had had a wonderfully interesting private talk with Mr. Fanshawe.

"I am going to give you geometry this morning," said Mr. Reeves to the public.

The juniors stared. Otway, greatly relieved, shut his exercise-book. If it was only Reeves, then DA might do for the present as it was.

"Mr. Johnstone—ahem—is otherwise engaged." Elliott winked at Otway, who winked back. "Of course," Mr. Reeves added presently, "Mr. Johnstone will see your exercise-books."

"Curse," said Otway to himself. He took up his pen again furtively, as Mr. Reeves appeared to be distracted.

"If Johnstone," whispered Elliott in his ear, "is going down that rope, I'm sorry for the rope, that's all."

"I hope it'll break," said Otway. "Serve him right for setting us such beastly sums."

"Did you see how Reeves sniggered?" murmured Elliott. "Bet you anything you like they're on a scent. Think they'll find the body this time?"

"Shouldn't wonder," said Otway, "if Johnstone's there." For all his malice in the setting of problems, Mr. Johnstone had the unfeigned respect of the Radfield juniors.

The rest of the Second Form were wandering in as the hour of the bell grew imminent. As Mr. Reeves providentially summoned Garett to talk to him at the desk, Otway's problem got on nicely.

"There's young Edgell at last," said the friendly Elliott, as Antoine slid into his place near by.

"Psst!" Otway furtively invited him. "Tony, I say."

The book was shoved under his eyes.

"Look here. If I produce the side DA, and drop a perpendicular on it from B, isn't that bit the line that fool wants?"

Antoine looked down at DA rather indifferently.

The angle at A was a right-angle, he suggested.

"Well, who said it wasn't?" said Otway, glancing hastily at the book.

"Nobody; only it did not seem much good dropping a perpendicular if one was dropped already."

"But Otway would drop as many perpendiculars from B on to the line DA as he liked, without your beastly——"

"You *draw* it so badly," said Antoine.

This was too much. Otway wanted to know if he had had him there to help with his geometry, or to make remarks on his drawing. And not long after the dialogue between them grew too heated, and Antoine was sent back to his place by Mr. Reeves.

Geometry with Mr. Reeves was decidedly dull, and proved a good time to think in. Antoine gazed out of the window and wondered if Mr. Johnstone was at this minute coming to the cave, and if Douglas would expect him to be there, and how furious he would be with him for not coming.

That he would be angry was clear to his mind, for the anger

had made part—the worst part—of the dream. He wished he could have explained to the headmaster how much and why he had wanted to go ; but he had been sleepy and stupid. Besides, he was beginning to have a great fear of speaking at all, for he always told things he had not meant to tell—and also people might look at him as if he was mad, which was the thing in life he most objected to. Of course, seeing Nick himself was the one real chance of getting to know—of setting these frantic puzzles straight. If he could force him anyhow to explain his anger—to say just what he meant by those looks in the headmaster's study. What had his telling Garett to do with Nick's turning his back on the Falconer ? Had he not said the thing was written, and gloated over it ? It was all the most " curious " thing that Tony had ever come across. He lost himself in dreamy meditation over it.

" And how, Edgell," said Mr. Reeves, " do you *spell* parallelogram ? "

The class chuckled appreciation. Really, Reeves was quite funny to-day.

" P-a-r——" said Antoine hopefully.

" Well ? " said Mr. Reeves, during the pause.

" After that," said Antoine, withdrawing his dark eyes from the window, " I do *not* spell it any more."

But he only had to write out the word ten times, because, as kind little Reeves told somebody afterwards, he really looked so seedy.

" Good news—great news ! " Mr. Fanshawe was the bearer of the happy tidings. " Alexander, I congratulate you ! That last idea was an inspiration."

" Thanks "—Alexander grasped his hand—" and thank heaven ! "

He rang the bell to despatch the telegram of one word that lay waiting on his table.

" We found it easily, thanks to your nice little plan. And there was the boy, sure enough. Johnstone and Robinson have taken him home."

" The worse for it—much ? "

" Feverish rather—helpless quite. To think of what might have happened if——" Fanny shuddered.

"We will not think of it. How long do you gather he has been there?"

"From the first, from what we could make out—three nights at least. The first night he slept in the open."

"Mad!" said Alexander. "He was feverish, you say; was he light-headed at all?"

"I suppose so. He plainly did not know all the time what he was saying. The boy is in great distress about something," said Fanshawe weightily. "He has got something on his conscience, if you ask me."

"If you ask *me*," Alexander thought, "he ought to have a good deal." He only asked, "How did he get food?"

Mr. Fanshawe temporised. "He must have lived on very little, Robinson thinks. He looked—how shall I say—rather pinched."

Mr. Fanshawe quite wished he had a larger audience. All the way home he had been thinking how he should relate it. Why, it would be in the papers very probably. "Discovery of the missing boy"—he could picture it clearly. If only the mother were here at least, but she could not arrive till night, and then she would have a bald narrative—second-hand—from Alexander. However, it was true Mrs. Archerson was not of the shrinking, delicate nature that demands the highest tact; perhaps his fine shades would have been wasted on her.

Alexander insisted on unromantic detail. "He must have eaten something. How did he get hold of it?"

"Ah, there we come to a question," said Mr. Fanshawe, shaking his head. "I had a theory he got it from the farm. So I stopped there to make a few inquiries on my return. But Mrs. Mowatt—who seemed to be very busy in the dairy—could only say that a boy had been there twice in the afternoon for milk; and that it might have been one of our boys, but he had no cap."

"That could not have kept him alive."

"Robinson had an idea that he went home to Shepstone for food," said Mr. Fanshawe lightly.

"Ha! When his mother came over here." Alexander nodded. "But they would have let her know at once."

"Of course they would. Johnstone made out some theory that Archerson had a hold over one of the village boys, and

made him fetch and carry. I forget how he worked it out: very elaborate, I thought."

"It's probable, though," said Alexander thoughtfully.

"What?" asked Mr. Fanshawe, slightly nettled. He still considered his own theory the best.

"That he has a hold over anybody. Did he ask for Edgell?"

Mr. Fanshawe thought his questioning erratic. How could one make a fluent tale with such interruption?

"Edgell—let me see. No; he called him names."

"Ah?"

"At least, somebody was a young sneak several times over suggesting him."

The headmaster was silent. "Thank goodness I did not send him," passed in his mind.

"Well, I give it up," he said rising. "Archerson was always beyond me."

Fanshawe stared. Fancy admitting it, even if it were so!

"At any rate, for the present the knot is cut. This is something to be thankful for. Though indeed," he added, "for that great woman's sake, I hope the boy won't be bad. One must think of her."

"Yes, indeed, the mothers." Mr. Fanshawe sighed. "By the way, I have a note for her here the boy had written. Probably he meant to despatch it home somehow, before he got so bad. It lay beside him on the ground, when we first went in. You will allow me, ahem, to confide it to you."

The headmaster looked it over. It was a clumsy note written in pencil on coarse paper, but carefully fastened and clearly directed to Mrs. Archerson. A stamp was attached, as if he had intended to post it but had been in doubt as to the address.

"There was no other communication?"

"None."

"Thank goodness," he thought again. Antoine's thunder seemed remote. He could sleep in peace to-night, at least.

"Many thanks, Fanshawe," he said. "It was uncommonly good of you to go. It is a great load off my mind."

Mr. Fanshawe laughed gaily.

"I seem to come in for all the incidents, don't I? By the way, Alexander, I have a theory."

"Let's hear it." The headmaster's smile was very pleasant.

"I think Archerson must have written, or begun to write that essay for the Medal."

"He denied it."

"Ah? All I know is, he kept quoting, clever-sounding stuff: persistently running through a long sentence, and then saying, 'That's good,' as if he liked it. Robinson did not seem to notice anything, but I had the clue. It's queer, isn't it? Could he not have written it, and torn it up in a pet?"

"Quite well."

"But you say he denied it?"

"He could quite well have done that too."

Mr. Fanshawe departed. There was no doubt at all, he reflected that Alexander was prejudiced against the Fifth Form boys. Still, take him all round, and allowances made, he was really not half a bad fellow.

Edgell major really did possess his share of the detective's instinct. So far as they could compass it, the authorities had kept the quest for the missing boy altogether apart from the school; but they could not prevent leakage of gossip through the staff among the boys; nor could they prevent the picked specimen here and there—especially in the school-house—from noticing more than he was intended to notice.

Philip kept his eyes open, and his mouth—unless in the company of Glenmuir—shut; and Glenmuir was on several occasions very properly astonished and impressed by the accuracy of his guesses, and the justice of his criticism of persons and their proceedings.

On the day now in question, he had connected some words rashly dropped by his friend the school doctor with the appearance at an early hour of Miss Fenwick in the headmaster's passage, and both things with the fuss Mr. Fanshawe made before his mysterious disappearance with Mr. Johnstone during school-hours. And something seriously wrong with the buttons of his favourite and oldest coat necessitated his paying a call on Miss Fenwick in her room after tea—a time when he knew she was likely to be alone.

The three who knew the real author of Archerson's discovery had guarded the secret perfectly up till now. But it had better be confessed at once that Miss Fenwick capitulated to

Philip before he had coaxed her for ten minutes. Her conscience did not accuse her much, as it happens, for telling him of Antoine's dream; though, as with Mr. Alexander, she begged him to be careful.

"Don't you know I always am," said Philip reproachfully. "Were you up, or did he wake you?"

"I was still up. It was hardly after twelve. I was in here, alone, luckily."

"Which of us were you thinking about?" inquired Philip.

"None of you, thank goodness. I was reading, just where I am now. He came straight in without knocking."

"Beastly cheek. Did you snub him?"

"I thought he was asleep at first; but I soon gave up that idea."

"Excited?" said Philip laconically.

"I could hardly hold him."

"He wanted to go straight off at once, I suppose?"

"He was determined to. I was at my wits' end," said Miss Fenwick quite calmly, "for a time."

"How did you prevent him?"

"Oh, he quieted down when he had been here a little."

"But what did you *do?*" Philip pressed her.

"I don't remember," said the matron. "I talked to him, I suppose. I suggested he should draw that map: something to do with his hands, you know."

"You might have managed lunatics all your life," said Philip with a sigh of deep approval.

"Well, he's so clever. It's not a bit the same with a silly boy. I laughed at him at first, because his hand shook; then you should have seen the way he went to work. He crumpled up the first he made and threw it away: and drew another, as steady as could be by then, and frowning—bless him!" Miss Fenwick paused. "So I said if he was good I should let him show it to the headmaster in the morning. And he was tired out by that time, and went to bed as good as gold."

Such was Miss Fenwick's narrative. Philip thought it over.

"Did Alexander lie to Fanshawe then?" he asked. "Fanshawe hadn't an idea who started the game—bet you anything you like; if he had, he wouldn't have been so complimentary. I say, did you tell Alexander to lie, Miss Fenwick?"

"Don't be ridiculous," said the matron. "I simply told

him the state of things. He has quite enough sense to see for himself what is necessary."

"Yes," said Philip, thoughtfully. "I bet he knows Fanny by now. Oh, lor'!"

"I'm not going to hear anything of your talk," said Miss Fenwick, who was extraordinarily severe on gossip. "So don't think it. Are you going to stay here all day, Edgell?"

"No," said Philip. "Only a little longer." He leant his arms on the table. "You've known kids like Tony before, haven't you, Miss Fenwick?" he asked.

"Well," said the matron, considering, "not exactly. There was Galton, Jimmy Galton; that wasn't quite the same, certainly. There was that little Hardinge—the one that died."

"Don't," said Philip.

"Now don't be a silly boy," said Miss Fenwick, coming up to him. "There's really nothing to excuse nerves in you. You ought to be thankful you're such a healthy family. His constitution's perfect, and he only needs a little sense in managing."

"So few people have it," said Philip. "I have of course—you needn't look at me like that; and so have you, Miss Fenwick, between ourselves. I mean—common people."

He really looked a little tired; he had been thinking a good deal. What with examinations, and private detective work, and Tony—he began to be not sorry the holidays were close ahead.

The matron stood a minute, thinking.

"Wait till you have known as many people as I have," she said, "and as many surprises. Every one is common at first sight—I never had a new boy yet that wasn't. But the more you get to know them the more odd things come out. Sometimes I get to believe there's hardly a person in the world who is common, really." She set a few of the manifold photographs on her mantelpiece straight. "You've got to care about people, of course," she added simply.

Philip rose to his full height and stood beside her.

"I will truly try and care about Fanny," said he.

"Oh, go along," said Miss Fenwick indignantly. "What is the use of ever trying to be serious?"

VII

ANTOINE was in the company of the violin—and thinking about Mrs. Archerson.

He had heard among the current reports circulating ceaselessly in the house, that she would arrive for a short time during the evening, and drive straight on home. So, as time went on, he watched very attentively, and listened still more. He had a feeling that, even without these otherwise useful senses, he would know as soon as she came inside the house. As the mysteries he hated crept upon him, he felt a great and growing need to see and hear her. She was so firm and so clear, that the thought of her was a rest. She might even help him by a word or two, for she was a person of the most delightful surprises. If he kept carefully in her neighbourhood, she might surprise him again.

The violin seemed to aid his thoughts about her, though it has to be confessed he was doing nothing at all. He knew he ought to practise, of course. Three short weeks ahead, no more—and how much would be required of him by a master who was very different in his demands from Mr. Carmichael.

Not that Mr. Carmichael was altogether negligible; he demanded himself a good deal more than Antoine generally found it convenient to give. He had actually remembered to go punctually to him that afternoon, and Mr. Carmichael had carelessly put off the lesson, and said that he would come to him in the music-room at six.

Well, it was after six now, and neither he nor Mrs. Archerson had arrived. Antoine stared at the music-page before him. He saw it all, of course, and he heard it; he was convinced he was playing it quite nicely—and then he realised with a jump a little later that he had never started. It was most unfortunate, but it was really impossible to make music to-night. It could not be done. He thought, and watched, and listened instead, fixing his eyes on the point of the bow lying idle at his side.

'That's the way you practise, is it?" said Mr. Car-

michael's gruff voice—not his best voice of society. Whereupon Antoine had to wake up, and give his attention for a time to him. He opened the lesson by informing him that he could not play. He meant to be considerate simply—but Mr. Carmichael did not take it well. He was out of humour because though, he had thought it a gain in the afternoon to be free of Antoine, he now discovered that the deferred lesson spoilt his evening. This was entirely Tony's fault, naturally, and had to be visited on him.

The lesson that evening was certainly not a success, and there were faults on both sides. Antoine in his languid mood of the moment was supremely irritating, and would have been so to a more even-tempered teacher than Carmichael. He played elegantly and lifelessly—at half-power, so to speak. The fact that the man at his side could lay his finger on no special fault made it more exasperating. For Mr. Carmichael had no great resources in language ; and unless he could point to some definite blunder—as he naturally could with the majority of the small boys he taught—he was unable to put the higher criticism, though vaguely felt, into words. He took shots at it, so to speak with slang phrases ; but Antoine's comprehension of English slang was limited, so they came together to an impasse pretty soon.

" Well, I suppose you imagine you've put that to bed," he said pleasantly at the end of the sonata. " Nicely polished off, ain't it ?—got the dust well out of the corners, and brought it up to the mark for society."

Such wealth of imagery takes time to grasp : Antoine regarded him thoughtfully.

" We have still ten minutes," said Mr. Carmichael. " Suppose you worked a little, instead of—er—playin' to the children."

" I am playing to you," said Antoine.

" Are you ? Don't sound much like it. Perhaps you think I can waste my time listening to a second-hand musical box. Play that again "—he suddenly became clear and cutting, " and play as if you meant it, do you mind ? "

" I can't play it," said Antoine, " I told you that. I——" He hesitated an instant, then it had to come. " I don't want to think about it to-night."

"Sorry to trouble you—but you've got to."

A pause of strain ensued.

"Look alive now," said Carmichael. "I'm waiting."

So was Antoine, obviously; also listening intently during the pause, for distant sounds of arrival were audible to him, if not to the master.

"It is," he said quickly and low. "Oh—I must go."

"I beg your pardon," said Carmichael, biting his moustache.

"You will let me go, please," said Tony, hastily laying down his bow. "You see, there is not very much time. And I cannot play at all to-night. You have heard that."

"I did," said Carmichael. "See here, just take up that fiddle and do what I say. We'll see about the time when it's done, not before."

He stood over the boy, looking rather dangerous.

Antoine shrugged despair, and seized the violin he had laid down. "Quick, then. If it is right—may I go?"

"Get on and hold your jaw," said the music-master.

He was playing now for his liberty, against time; and he played as Carmichael, at least, had never heard him. For the first time, the man was convinced in spite of himself of the powers with which he had been trifling. The concentration and the passion alike were quite unchildish, and they rather took his breath. Unluckily, Antoine's will was a broken reed to-night; it failed him suddenly. He stopped, and once more flung down his bow.

"I can't," he said, half choking. "I said so. Let me go to her."

Carmichael, brought up short in his unwilling admiration, resented that and the shock together. He hardly heard what the boy said; he only saw the gesture of rebellion. Deliberate rebellion such as this had never come near him before, and he was really quite incapable of dealing with it. He descended to threats, and he did not pick his language to deliver them. Finally, he said that Antoine should finish then and there or he would go straight to Alexander.

Until he actually made for the door, the boy hardly seemed to take in his meaning; but the action awakened him completely.

"Go there?" he stammered in surprise. "Oh, but—but—you can't."

"Can't I? We'll see about that." Carmichael opened the door, which gave on to the staircase. Antoine came after him in a flash.

"But—she is there," he said, breathless.

"She? What are you talking about?"

"Nick's mother. I—I heard her come. She is down there with him."

"Rot." Carmichael was a little taken aback; he eyed Antoine dubiously. "You couldn't hear anything when the door was shut. A little game of yours to get off, this—eh?"

"A game!" said the boy between his teeth. "Oh—one is happy to play games, I think."

They were facing one another. Carmichael stared at him blankly a minute.

"What do you want?" he asked quite helplessly.

"Her—I want *her*. Let me go!"

A door beneath was opening, and voices emerged into the hall.

"Well," said Carmichael at his gruffest, "go and be d—d."

The word was necessary to his feelings, for he had seldom been so variously stirred in one half-hour. But Tony did not hear the word his freaks had elicited, for he was gone before the sentence ended.

Mrs. Archerson arrived, and had her short interview with the headmaster. He gave her the note first of all, when she had learnt the all-important fact of Douglas's whereabouts; for he felt her boy's own hand must reassure her more than any other intrusive agent.

She read it carefully, over by the window of his study in the level evening light; very carefully Alexander thought, for she remained reflecting over it for some time. When she came back to him she held the paper still in her hand.

"Yes," she said, folding it up as though something troublesome was mastered. "Now let me hear how you discovered him, please."

Mr. Alexander told her what there was to tell, under headings, as it were. The first heading, concerning Antoine, seemed to interest her, and she asked a question or two; but she also seemed a little absent, and Alexander soon went on

to the next. Mr. Fanshawe's story suffered in his hands as that gentleman had foreseen. But Mrs. Archerson seemed quite satisfied, and she even admitted the theory about the village boy. Nick had a tool, it seemed, that would fit the theory very well; and his mother appeared to have little doubt that he had been well and secretly supplied in the retreat he had chosen. As to accounting for the boy's behaviour, Mr. Alexander had said all he intended to say on that subject, and left it to his mother's knowledge of him to supply the rest. She had hardly asked, indeed; though he had given her in duty bound the facts of Nick's misbehaviour and defiance. There had been throughout no trace of complaint or even of injured feeling on her part; and at the close of Alexander's careful report, her thanks were frank as they were warm.

He asked her finally if she would like to see anybody else before she left; for it was a free hour, and all or any of the actors in the day's work were at her service. He looked at her very steadily as he made the suggestion; for truly she puzzled him, greatly though he admired her.

"I am afraid my boy is ill," she said, fixing her own straight glance on him in return. "Many thanks, but I am quite satisfied. I must go to him without delay."

He quietly acquiesced. "You do not blame us?"

"You? Dear me, no. You were completely in the right, and he as completely in the wrong. He must know that quite well. And you have had all this trouble and distraction. There are no excuses for him—that I can make. It is his own fault that there are none."

These were her last words to him, and often afterwards they recurred; they seemed to him at the moment both proud and pathetic, and he had that image of her—proud and pathetic—clearly fixed, though he never saw her again.

She was making her last farewells in the hall, when some movement made the headmaster glance above him. Antoine stood at the head of the front stairs, where the house-boys were not permitted, grasping at the railing. The fact was that he had begun to feel that he would have to go after her, if she did not come to him.

She did come. She left Mr. Alexander one minute, and went firmly up the steps ; and he found her standing in front of him, holding out a scrap of paper.

" He put that in mine for you," she said, with strange gravity. " Tell Philip I will send him news. Good-bye, Tony."

After that she took his hand for a second, and went down again. The next minute the carriage-wheels crushed on the gravel, and she was gone.

Antoine frowned, puzzled at the note he held in his hand. It was Nick's writing, of course, though very shaky and difficult to read. He opened and made it out gradually, by dint of giving it his whole attention—a thing which could still just be done.

" DEAR TONY,—

" (1) Alexander's going to cheat me of my rights next term, to pay me out for cheeking him about Horne and Jerrard.

" (2) Horne and Jerrard burnt my Falconer Essay to pay me out for ragging them in class.

" (3) I am writing this to pay *you* out for giving me away to Horne and Jerrard.

" Now do you see, my dear little sneak ? Tear this up.

" Yours affectionately,

" D. G. A.

" I told mother about you, too—just to be on the safe side when I was not there to keep an eye on you."

Tony read it through twice, still standing against the polished railing of the headmaster's staircase. Lifting his head, he was quite surprised to find Mr. Alexander near him ; he must have come up the soft-carpeted front stairs very quietly indeed.

" But I did not," he said aloud, looking more hopelessly perplexed than ever. His eyes crossed Alexander's, as if he was not there. " At least, I do not *think* I did. I wish—I could remember."

The headmaster passed him by and went on to his own room. " I never felt so like hating a boy in my life," he told himself very seriously, when he got there. " And to think I should not have foreseen it ! "

IV. PHILIP

I

"AND do try not to play the fool," was Philip's parting with Tony, on the second evening of the holidays, when he left him at their little country station, on his way to join Glenmuir in Scotland. Glenmuir had asked to be allowed Antoine too, but from the first mention of it Philip discouraged him.

"He ought to get right away," argued Glenmuir, when he put his point earnestly to Philip on the last night of term. "I'm sure he ought. I never saw anything so utterly tame as he has been these last three weeks. Reeves may enjoy it; but it's not right, and it's not a bit like Tony."

"You've never seen him at home," said Philip. "You needn't think he goes on the loose at home like he does here. He's tame enough when my uncle has him by the scruff. Not a kick left in him."

Glenmuir laughed incredulously.

"It's a fact," said Philip. "My uncle, when he's really on his day, would make some people in this place look silly. Why, I have to look out myself at times. I can't think what you're grinning at. As I was saying, Glenmuir, I'll put Tony into his arms with my blessing, and then I'll get away by the night train on the thirtieth. Great Scott! I've had enough of it." He stretched his arms. Privately he was almost triumphant at having brought the kid off, as he would have said, without a fuss. What the exact fuss was that he feared he never quite put into words; whatever it was, it had not happened, owing to his good generalship, and he was content.

"Well, it shall take its pretty medal home," said Glenmuir, throwing an arm about him. He perfectly comprehended why Philip had refused point-blank to travel north with him. A thing that Edgell undertook, he commonly did well; and though he expressed it somewhat pictorially, his intention was to see Antoine through from one life to the other, before he left him for his own well-earned holiday. They remained clasped in a dramatic embrace for a minute, both staring at

the Falconer Medal, which lay in its glory, gleaming softly against blue velvet on the table before them.

"I shall never get rid of the feeling of this term," said Philip soberly after the pause.

"Oh yes, you will—at Braid," answered Glenmuir, who believed in his native heath as a cure for all troubles.

It was that same last night of term that Philip wrote to Mrs. Archerson, giving his Scotch address, and claiming her promise of information. He had heard no direct word of her since her departure, which astonished him a little: for among various contradictory reports drifting from Shepstone none had reached the school hinting at any grave illness. The Archersons seemed simply to have dropped out of Radfield without a sign, as though they had never figured there. It was singular, and it disquieted Philip in his rather foreboding state of mind.

He did not believe that Antoine had heard a word either, but, especially at school, he found it impossible to talk to him on the subject. Philip had a very keen suspicion of the boy's attitude to Mrs. Archerson, although Tony had never spoken of her to him; indeed, one might say, owing to that, for the fact that Antoine talked so liberally on all ordinary topics, made his reticence over his deeper feelings the more noticeable. The vigorous charm Nick's mother possessed, of which Philip himself had been very sensible, had penetrated Tony to the extent of tying his tongue. At least Philip, accustomed to passing lightly over his peculiarities, was willing to adopt that theory as accounting for his silence. Yet he felt it needed something more to account for hers.

Even while he was still at school, he was conscious vaguely of a puzzle behind, and he trusted to holiday leisure with the boy to solve it. Yet when the opportunity actually came of their walk down over the fields from Brackenhall to the station, on the first fair long evening of the summer holidays, he found himself just as incapable as ever. It was not only Tony's silence that baffled him, though he walked for most of the way at his elbow without a word. It was the listless, lifeless air—what Glenmuir called tame—that was so extraordinarily unfamiliar. The day had been torrid, and Philip would fain have persuaded himself it was sleepiness consequent

upon the heat; but an uncomfortable instinct told him that it would not do. Dimly it entered Philip's mind that he had lost his bearings somehow, though it was beyond him to conceive why, or how to help.

Philip piqued himself on what he called "tact" in managing his kind, and he had a conscience as regarded Tony. Resting at the last stile, he made a real effort to cross that other more intangible barrier he felt, and tried one or two probing questions, kindly enough; but he got nothing by them and finally gave it up, contenting himself at parting with the warning already quoted about playing the fool. He got no smile in answer, only a long look, almost as though Antoine would have been quite glad of more definite directions. But the phrase was eminently satisfactory to Philip himself, and as the train ran out of the station he leant back feeling that he had satisfied the shade of his father, and left the perfect code of conduct, as he understood it, in Tony's hands.

Mrs. Archerson's letter came to him at Braid. It was very kind and very clear; and, though it shook Philip's vague forebodings into reality, he was thankful to have it. Douglas was ill; and, though there was nothing immediately serious, the effects had dragged on longer than the exposure he had suffered seemed to warrant, and the doctors united in warning her to carry him out of England for the winter. She was going almost immediately to Montreux, for she wished the boy to look upon it as a holiday simply until his state of mind should warrant his being told the truth; but she had given the facts to Mr. Alexander, and taken his name off the Radfield books; for, even with the best fortune in the world, there was no chance of Douglas's returning there.

She sent her love, but she did not mention Antoine by name; and Philip, having read, struck the table with an irritation that made his friend look round.

"Perhaps she has written to Tony too," said Glenmuir, when he explained; but Philip shook his head.

"She told him originally that she would write to me," he said. "And she has such—such an infernal way of saying just what she means. There's more in it—there must be. Look here," he held the letter out like a challenge. "Wouldn't you say she was fond of me—almost?"

"Quite," said Glenmuir, when he had read. He tried to be serious, for Philip was obviously so, and the letter was rather tragic; but the idea of Mrs. Archerson, as he remembered her, being laid low as easily as the rest struck the note of humour all the same. "Were you specially nasty to her, Phil?" said Glenmuir.

"No," said Philip, shortly, "I did what I could; she knows I wanted to help; but Tony *did* help. He did what no one of the rest of us could have done, and in a way that meant more than all our fussing and talk. I see that: I bet Alexander saw it: *you* see it, don't you?"

"Yes," said Glenmuir meekly.

"Well, why can't she? That's where the whole thing sticks for me." Philip glared at him severely.

"Do you think," said Glenmuir after consideration, "that Tony and Nick quarrelled badly before he went off, and that she takes Nick's side?"

Philip rose and looked out at the rain-swept landscape.

"Yes," he said, "since you mention it, that's what I do think. It's the only explanation. But I'm disappointed in her."

"She's his mater," Glenmuir murmured.

"I know that," said Philip, curtly as ever. "But there is such a thing as abstract justice; and I'd have sworn, of all the people I ever met, she knew what it was."

"Are you abstractly just to me, mamma?" Glenmuir addressed his mother as she entered at the moment.

"I hope so," she said stopping. "Why?"

"Only Phil was laying down the law about mothers and justice, you know."

"Solomon," said Lady Earraid, smiling at the tall boy in the window. "Can I be of any assistance in the discussion, Philip—or shall I retire?"

"Phil won't let you divide his baby," said Glenmuir with the futility vacation permits. "Which was what old Solomon's justice came to, if I remember right. Phil's the mother in this instance, you see, mamma, though you'd never guess it to look at him."

"Don't talk rot," Philip growled, as Glenmuir's mother laughed.

"I wish he had brought his baby with him," she said. "I would have seen he got justice, if that is all."

"It isn't all," said Glenmuir. "Not for some kinds of baby. That's just the point."

"It is all," asserted Philip, turning round to contradict him. "It's all they, or I, or anybody ask. If you can't get everything—which nobody can—get justice. I don't mean Solomon's beastly slip-shod trickery—or—or Shylock's—or any other Jew's——"

"They call him a broad-minded Radical at school," Glenmuir observed aside.

"But the real thorough justice that's worth the name."

"Unseasoned?" asked the lady of the house. She was observing him with interest, for he rarely forgot his shyness in her presence.

Philip paused to take it in.

"Mercy, you mean? Who expects mercy? Who ever got it—except kids—and women——"

"And such weak fools." She finished and laughed. "Then it is not a question of children now?"

"Children—no." He seemed set back.

"I beg your pardon. Glenmuir and his nonsense about the babies put me out. If it had been a child I might have pleaded—as a mother—for mercy too. But for the big minds of the world, I believe I agree with you—justice is enough."

"And the bigger they are," said Philip, "the less they get it—ever." He turned to look out again, staring at the swinging lines of the high moors through the mist. He began to wonder why he had spoken.

"Who," said Lady Earraid aside to her son, "has lately failed in the higher justice to Philip?"

"'Sh, mamma. He was discoursing in the abstract. Can't you tell it by his choice of words?"

"It's getting finer," said Philip, rather displeased at their levity. "I'm going out." And unlatching the long window suddenly, he went.

Philip went home in the last week of August to work, as he severely declared to Glenmuir, who was personally preparing to shoot. He bore with him the letters which had reached him by the early post that he might study them at leisure in the

train. One was a bulky packet from Switzerland, the other a thin letter, much bestamped, and bearing his father's well-known scrawled superscription. He was quite glad to be away from even friendly eyes to read both, for he more than guessed the nature of their contents. He opened the smaller one first, flushing as he did so. It was short.

"DEAR PHIL,—

"I'm in the devil of a rush, and the mail is going; so strikes me I can pay you out nicely, you young thief, for the brevity of yours. Why can't you write a decent letter with flourishes, instead of a thunderclap of news that might have travelled on a cable? Now I shan't ask, though you bet I want to.

"Lord, how I used to admire the man who got the Falconer in my day—when the standard was a bit higher, no doubt. He was a real cultivated man—not a kid like you. He's fat now, and retired on a C.S. pension, nor I don't admire him any more. Was it a subject you knew anything about, or did you just get at them with your long words? Never mind, so long as you've got the little gold penny safe to show me. That's all I care about, to hand around and prove to them as don't believe it that I've got a clever son. Bless you, anyway, my dearest lad,

"Your father,

"J. E."

Philip laid it down, and looked out at the travelling landscape with misty eyes. That was the reward of his three months' work, not the stupid little medal the fellows thought so much of; that was what he had counted on right through, the moment's keen pleasure to his hard-working distant father. He knew Jem's style, and he knew this pleasure had been his.

He should have all the details he demanded now, however much they should reduce the effect he had loved to make; the fact of the lucky subject, largely covered by his favourite reading; the fact of the single other serious competitor; all the palliating details plainly put. Jem would not think the less of him for putting them plainly—that was the beauty of it. His own modesty was so ingrain that he believed in

Philip's. The more beautifully such modesty was laid out in words on paper, the more Jem believed in it. The boy laughed at himself as the thought came to him : one of those moments of pure laughter that are worth hours of self-abasement to the not uncommon type of youth that Philip represented ; for they show us our failings in a flash, instead of putting them elaborately through their paces to be dwelt upon and condemned to such purpose that they become dearer than ever. Tucking away the thin sheet in his innermost pocket, he turned warm-hearted to his other correspondent.

Mrs. Archerson's strong singular handwriting was growing quite familiar to him, for her letters had followed one another during the month past. Her confidence touched him deeply ; it suggested that she was lonely too, and that in this last trouble her strength failed at it. He was being treated, he felt, like an elder son, and as the tragedy her plain words portrayed came home to him, he felt even painfully small and incapable.

" I have tried to tell Douglas the truth about the future, but so far I have failed. He has never led the life of an invalid, and he resists, and will resist, at every point. He is writing hard, and full of hopes and plans ; and he seems happiest when I leave him alone."

Then towards the end :

" Hs spoke of you the other day. It surprised me, for I hardly thought he knew you. He said he wished you could see what he had written : some subject in which you are both interested. He said he used to show you translations at one time, and that you had made more really sensible remarks than any one he had ever met (myself, of course included). I believe in his heart he admires you very much, and I know by the way he talks you were kind to him."

In a postscript she added :

" It occurred to me to suggest to Douglas sending his manuscript to you, since I was writing : and I discovered at once that he intended to do so. Of course he did not admit it, but it was obvious. Equally of course he lays the responsibility of the presumption at my door. If it annoyed you, he said, it was my fault, not his : so abuse me, Philip, if you please.

I asked him if he had any messages and he said—oh dear no. All such follies are beneath him."

Philip read the last two sentences several times, trying to extract their significance. He had to make up his mind before he reached home what he should say to Antoine, if as he expected, no word had reached him. He had written nothing on the subject to the boy, having the feeling, as always with Tony, that it was better and kinder to speak than to write. Personally Philip would have preferred to write, for he was shy in speech on intimate subjects, and he had even completed a letter which was a model of its kind: but having read the model twice through he had suddenly torn it up; for strangely the vision of Tony studying it alone had arisen, and he could not bear it. Since he was afflicted with a brother of that peculiar sort, he must face the work it entailed: such shortly was Philip's feeling; and in his usual businesslike manner he devoted part of the leisure of his long journey to preparing for the necessity.

After some time, he folded the letter with a sigh, and opened the close-written manuscript which accompanied it. He stopped on the title for a moment with a start of surprise, for it was very familiar; it had stared at him last from the back of those beautifully written sheets he had carried to Mr. Fanshawe. Then, forcing himself to the task with a curious effort, he read it all through to the end with scrupulous care. Then he thrust it aside viciously, and gave himself for the remainder of the journey to frowning meditation. The ghosts of last term, which the high moors of Braid had successfully dispersed, returned and thronged about him.

Archerson's essay bore no date, Philip had ascertained: yet he had the best reason in the world to know that it must have taken months to prepare, though he had written it there by the lake in Switzerland. What on earth had the little fiend being doing then, not to enter for the medal? Why on earth had he let Philip win it, enjoy his triumph to the last fine flower at leisure, and now, at the end of all, feel like a sneak to have done so?—unless indeed the whole object of his existence was to find the most subtle means of annoying others. If that was what he existed for—he had better stop existing as soon as possible. Philip was shocked at the thought, but he

had it quite clearly: feeling resentment all the greater that his joy in his first letter was now tainted, and the pity and sympathy roused by the second so rudely thrust aside. He was unhappy, uncomfortable, and hurt; something deeper than his vanity was hurt by the method of Nick's retaliation, arriving now. And his mother thought he cared!—did he care for nobody then, nobody at all? If this was the sort of way in which he had tormented those fellows in the Lower Sixth, he began to have more sympathy with their violence. If Tony had ever been so cunningly stung—Philip shook himself as if the sting was physical, and packed the essay away. His own obstinacy awoke to life as he did so. He would jolly well let the impudent little beggar know what he thought: he would patronise his efforts, and repay him in kind. Archerson would call him a humbug—he could hear him saying it—but he would feel it none the less. Two could play at Nick's game, and Nick should know it.

So Philip, tired and cross, longing very much for some flattery to set him right with himself, and not a little for Tony's simple company, arrived home at last very late in the evening, and found nobody but his uncle upon the scene.

M. Lucien Lemaure was a gentleman small and fragile in appearance, but with the spirit, will, and capacity for work of a giant. He seemed actually to revel in the crowd of small duties and undertakings which are sure to flow in, in whatever department life, upon the willing worker: and in fitting them into the day until barely a moment of legitimate leisure was left him. His official work lay in London, but as soon as he found his wife's health suffered by town life, he moved without complaint to the country, travelling up daily in term time to his duties at the College, and accumulating meanwhile enough musical work in the Brackenhall and Roxminster district to fill most of his holiday hours as well.

His temper was not quite up to the level of his other strong qualities, and he had a tongue under which the most hardened in the ranks of his pupils shivered; but he taught his art very finely, and his repute as a teacher suffered in no degree by a name for severity. No one ever got the better of him, but his wife, who did as she chose with him at all times. He was fond

of both his nephews, but he treated them very differently. Philip he regarded aspertaining to his wife's department. He deprecated her habit of spoiling him, but he did not interfere, and the pair caused him constant if well-concealed amusement. Antoine, on the other hand, was his official charge, confided to his hands by the "family," of whom M. Lemaure thought more than of his life. He took Antoine very seriously indeed—one might have said nervously; for in M. Lemaure —as sometimes occurs in the first direct descendant of genius —conscience replaced inspiration to a degree almost to represent it. He was rather like a small steam-tug, hustling Antoine conscientiously along the course where the wind of his grandfather's personality would have carried him without effort or noise.

Philip found him this evening still up to his eyes in his correspondence at eleven o'clock, and with a general air about him of beginning, rather than finishing, a quiet evening's work.

"Tiens, Philippe," he remarked, glancing up as though the boy had only been absent a few hours. Philip waited until he had completed the letter on which he was engaged, and then asked in proper terms after his aunt. M. Lemaure said she was not very well.

"What has she been doing?" said Philip with a frown.

"She had best," said Monsieur as he addressed a letter, "offer her own explanations perhaps. She will not yet have retired."

Philip, seeing he was not required, rose.

"Antoine's gone to bed?" he said indifferently, stopping by his uncle's table.

"In bed and asleep, two hours ago."

"He is well?"

"In health, perfectly." Monsieur tossed aside the answered letter. Philip imagined the irritation of the movement was not wholly directed towards the correspondent.

"Not in spirit, sir?" he ventured to suggest.

"Bah, do not speak of him," said his uncle, dismissing the subject with a shrug. "He has given me as much trouble as he can for three days past, that is all. I can do nothing with him. He will not even pretend to work, and does not scruple

to be rude into the bargain. With your English race, I do believe, obstinacy is in the blood."

"I'm sorry," said Philip, who wanted to laugh. If Tony was naughty again he must be recovering. "What's he been up to exactly?"

"Wednesday," said M. Lemaure, throwing down his pen, "it began. He was perfectly well-behaved after breakfast when he came to me, and I set him his work as usual. At four in the afternoon I met him on the stairs. I asked where he was going; he said out upon the common. I told him to be in by six, and I would look over his exercises. He said he had not written any. I asked him what he had done all day, and he said, 'Nothing.' So I told him he would have to stay at home and write them, as I must have the work done by six. 'Oh,' says monsieur, 'I can't now; I am going out.' I never suffer insolence, as you know. I shut him into an empty room with his books, and informed him that I expected the work and an apology at six."

"Didn't you get them?" said Philip, who was interested.

"Neither then nor since."

"He declared war, then?"

"Revolt," M. Lucien corrected sharply. "That little impertinent—it is madness. I lock him up, he refuses to work; I let him out, he refuses to eat; I tell him to practise, he plays heaven knows what absurdities; I take away his instrument and his books, and he lets loose that tongue of his until I feel I could box his ears. To-day—the same story. C'est de la pure folie."

He had risen and was walking to and fro, tugging at his moustache.

"I'm awfully sorry, sir," said Philip demurely. "Shall I tackle him, or would you rather not?"

Monsieur stopped in front of him, and considered him with bent brows. He had to look considerably up to his nephew, but nothing could mar his dignity of demeanour.

"You?" he said. "You have an influence, perhaps?"

"Oh," said Philip, "we manage kids at school."

"Are your methods not—inartistically violent?"

"Depends on the case," said Philip. "I've put on pressure before now; but up to the present I've managed the kid

without that sort of thing. Only they all know it's there if I want to use it, you see, which makes a kind of difference." He looked most lazily capable as he stood in the lamplight before his uncle.

"Yes," said M. Lemaure. "That is the English attitude precisely." He seemed rather gratified to meet it. "Well, Philippe, should my influence fail, I may allow you to try yours."

Wherewith he dismissed him and returned to his business.

Philip paid a call on his aunt, and found the welcome he expected. She was exclusively interested in himself and his doings over quite a long period, in the way most consoling to the tired traveller; and when at last they simultaneously sent one another to bed, he left her feeling his confidence in himself and the world greatly restored.

Reaching his own room, he discovered, as she had promised him, his supper and a fire, and he fed, warmed, and unpacked at leisure. He listened once or twice at Antoine's door—their rooms were adjacent—for it had occurred to him during his uncle's recital that he might have been dreaming again—but hearing no sound, he concluded he was securely asleep. So as he felt rather wakeful himself in spite of his weariness, he took a book and read by his fire until he was aroused by a clock striking two; which reminded him that he might do well to go to bed. It was not till he was in darkness that he discovered by a luminous crack that there was a light in his brother's room. "Reading in bed and left his light on," thought Philip, the detective instantly uppermost. So, as the switch of the electric light was in reach by standing in the doorway, he turned the handle carefully and pushed open the door.

The first thing his eyes fell on was the bed, which except for a small dog asleep on the end of it, was guiltless of occupant: the next was Antoine himself, conspicuously wide awake in an easy-chair. The table beside him was littered with papers, but he was doing nothing at all. Philip, struck motionless with astonishment in the doorway, encountered his full steady gaze.

"Well, I'm hanged," said Philip, with all the expression he could muster.

Antoine showed no emotion in response. "You are come," was all he said after staring a little.

"So it seems. May I ask *what* you are doing?"

But it seemed that Philip might not. As he made a motion to advance, Tony loosened his cramped limbs, and getting up, crossed rather stiffly towards him.

"Is there a fire there?" he said quickly, looking past his brother's sentinel figure. "Oh, but I shall come then to it."

"No, you won't," said the elder promptly, laying hold of him. "You'll go to bed jolly sharp, or you'll be sorry for it." He spoke brusquely, for he was much disturbed. Really a kid like this was too much bother. "Tact" is not on the spot at two o'clock in the morning; a little bracing would not be bad for him by way of a change. "What do you mean by being up at this time of night?" said Philip, holding him in a grasp there was no resisting. "Just tell me that."

"I am cold," said Antoine.

"I daresay. You can warm yourself by getting into bed; or I'll warm you with a licking. Whichever you like, but choose pretty sharp."

The boy seemed to try to speak, but he only swallowed something in his throat; just now he was forbidden by some tyrannous power even the relief of tears. Instead, he shivered sharply under his captor's clutch.

"You *are* cold." Philip made the discovery with natural indignation, sliding one of his hands down his arm to the wrist. "How long have you been sitting there?"

"I don't know. An hour, perhaps."

"An hour? When did you come to bed?"

"At nine, I think."

"*Nine?* Do you know that's five hours ago?"

"Five, is it?" said Antoine. "Then it will soon be light." He turned to look wistfully at the window, which was wide open, and the night air blowing in. In the draught with the open door the loose papers on the table were growing restive. As Philip stood nonplussed, still holding him, one sheet slid off and settled nearly at their feet. Antoine, biting his lip, looked from it to the face above him—but Philip was far from noticing such a detail.

"If you're cold, why don't you shut the window?" he growled.

Antoine leant his head back, breathing rather short. Shut the window—really it was far too long to explain the connection between the open window and that paper at their feet; only one person in the world understood that besides himself, and he was many hundred miles away in France. Instead, he turned his eyes longingly to the fire; it was warmer than the stars, and might be pleasant for a change; if Philip would but understand without explanation, and let him get to it.

And Philip miraculously did. Something caught him by the throat as he looked down at the boy's face, sharpened and altered since he had seen it—older, surely, he told himself. This was not the cheerful rebel of Radfield, the imp who had worried his uncle and Mr. Reeves. Something hurt him in Tony's passive look and attitude under the ridiculous force he was exerting.

"Come in then, if you must," he said grumpily, and set him free. Instantly the boy stooped and caught the paper up, slipping it under the others on the table. Deft as he was though, he was unable to be furtive, and so he was betrayed.

"Hullo!" Philip swung about. "That's what you've been up to. Writing, is it? Here, excuse me."

"Philippe!" But despite the passionate cry of protest he made a raid on the table, swept all the papers together with one turn of wrist, and holding them easily out of Antoine's reach, returned swiftly to his room. There he planted himself comfortably in his own chair by the fireside.

"*Now* let's look," said Philip with the greatest coolness. "All right, ducky, you can come." He made room benevolently beside him, for he was excited and amused, to the entire banishment of his late annoyance. "Get your little hands warm, and don't interrupt. I'm busy."

Here was a new discovery in his world! The idea of Antoine's venturing to write had never occurred to him once, though he thought himself so well prepared. He, who could not produce a letter without half a dozen mistakes on one page, to have mapped out calmly on his own account all these close-packed sheets of music! A great deal must really be excused any one whose proceedings were so constantly new and entertaining. Good gracious, came the sudden thought,

what would his uncle say? Imagine his expression, if he knew!

"What," said Philip, after an interval of general inspection —for unfortunately he could not read a line—"whatever did make you think of doing it?"

No answer at all; indeed the question was not to be answered, had he known. Philip glanced sharply sideways.

"What's the matter, kiddy? You don't mind my looking, do you?"

Antoine shook his head.

"It was rather beastly of me to snatch it like that," said Philip, turning remorseful at the sight of his white languor. "Tony, I say, you'd never think I'd *tell?*"

"No," said Antoine, choking a little. "It's all right. It—isn't that."

Suddenly Philip let the papers slide from his limp hand to the floor, for an overpowering thought had come to him. Tony knew! What had he been thinking of? He knew the truth of Archerson's illness and had been bearing the knowledge alone all these days. Why had such a possibility never occurred to him?

"Listen, Tony," he said with decision. The hand across Tony's face slipped down, and he turned his eyes obediently. "Just tell me now: you have heard from them?"

"From him," said Antoine.

"How long ago?"

"I don't know. A long time. Perhaps two weeks."

"A fortnight?" Philip frowned, puzzled. "Good news or bad?"

"Rather bad," with the same languid indifference.

"The same, then, as she told me?"

"I suppose so."

"She said he didn't know."

"He found out," said Antoine.

"She didn't tell him?" Tony shook his head. A pause. "May I see the letter?" said Philip doubtfully.

"No," said Tony: adding after an interval, "it is burnt up."

"What," said Philip, rather low, "did the little brute say to you?" He tried in vain to keep the anger out of his voice.

"Don't," said Antoine shrinking. "It does not matter now."

"*Why* does it not matter?"

Complete silence fell on the question.

"Look here," said Philip slowly at last. "Do you remember telling me the evening I left home that you would talk to me properly when it was finished? Well now, here's what I think: if it is *not* finished—if you are not done with him completely and utterly you ought to be. The thing is at an end: it has got to be, once for all. Do you hear?" He summoned his whole authority to speak.

"Yes," Antoine answered. "That is all finished. He is dead."

Philip gripped the chair with a spasm of pure terror.

"How dare you?" he cried angrily. "How do you know?"

Antoine winced again from his exclamation.

"Don't," he repeated. "It is all right."

"But—when?"

"The day before yesterday—was it?" He frowned. "Wednesday, yes. In the evening at about eight." He offered it as the most ordinary piece of information.

"But—you can't have had a letter since my last?"

"No."

"A telegram?"

"No. The letter will come perhaps to-morrow. I should think it would."

"Rubbish! You're mad." Philip was furious, as one is after a useless fright. "You've been dreaming."

"No, not a dream." Antoine made a last effort to explain. "Because, you see, it was not the night—this time. It was eight: I had not gone to bed." After an anguished moment, he said with a sob, "Perhaps I am mad. That will be the best."

"Tony!" Philip caught him hastily. "See here, my dear, I was talking rot. You're not mad—you're simply ill—ill from want of sleep. You haven't slept for three nights, have you now? Well then, of course you get things wrong—any one would. You're as sane as I am, and a lot cleverer. How could you have written all that music if you weren't?" In all his life Philip had never used that swift persuasive tone before. A great need called it out, a need that summoned

all the best of him, head and heart. For the minute, codes were laid aside, and he did not care the least what he said or did. Any one could have seen Henriette Lemaure's careless passion flash through him at that moment, as he pulled the boy close to him. "You've only got to sleep and forget about it," he said presently in a steadier voice: "Look here, come and sleep with me—would you like to?" It occurred to him that he did not want to leave him alone.

Antoine, who had been motionless hitherto, roused nervously at the suggestion.

"There is Max," he said, referring to the dog. "And that—the score." He stretched his hand towards the papers on the floor. "I must take it back."

Philip rolled them up and let him take one end, but retained his hold on the other.

"Rot," he said. "Max won't eat them, will he? I'll put them back just where I took them from, honour bright, and you stop here in the warm. Come now."

Antoine hesitated. The fire no doubt was good, though he rather longed to get back to his big window with the stars. Philip himself was big and splendid, and more gentle than he had remembered, in the quite incredible interval since he left that house. He decided to spare further talking and to trust him, and he left the paper roll in his hand, though he kept an eye on it anxiously.

"I think I shall stick it in the fire," said Philip who was recovering himself, mocking the look. "It can't really be good for much at your age. Are you coming to bed?" he added, stopping carelessly beside him. His indifference to what he was carrying was in Antoine's eyes extraordinary. He stooped and picked up the composer too, as if he were a mere extra, and dropped him into bed on his way through to Antoine's own beloved, cold, starry room. He stayed there a little, arranging the sheets methodically just as he had found them; then there came the clash of the window closing, and a pacifying word to the dog. Lastly, returning, Philip shut the door with some resentment.

"How you *can* live in such a draught," he said. "Good heavens, if it isn't striking three! Go to sleep this instant, you disgraceful kid!"

II

PHILIP awoke to disturbing reflections, not reduced by the discovery that he was alone in his rooms. Worrying at daybreak is no joke, and the consequence was that he was punctual at breakfast. His uncle, who usually had to dispense with his company at that meal in the holidays, exclaimed with ironical congratulation; his aunt with affectionate reproach. She had, it appeared, come downstairs herself in order to have the pleasure of sending his breakfast up to him.

"You see," as M. Lemaure remarked to Philip, "you have cured her already."

Tony was there, but not apparently eating. This did not particularly surprise anybody. for he had a habit of rising at unconscionable hours and procuring food on his own account in the servants' quarters; though he generally condescended to appear at the family meal, and give them the benefit of his company and conversation. What was remarkable to-day was that he was not talking. His aunt, who was ignorant of the fact that he was in disgrace, was concerned at his silence and his pallor; and Tony was not sorry when Philip appeared to distract her attention from him.

"Has the post come?" was Philip's first question.

"Yes, dear. Were you expecting anything?"

"Oh, not specially." He shot a glance at Tony, who shook his head.

"I knew it," said Philip, angry at his own relief. "Perhaps he will be sober now."

The meal proceeded with very little spoken. What talking there was was between Philip and his aunt. M. Lucien looked severe over his letters and his French newspaper, and vouchsafed not a glance in Antoine's direction.

At last, very near the end of breakfast, he spoke. Madame had been lamenting the absence among her letters of one she expected from Paris. At the mention of it her husband woke up.

"I had forgotten, Cécile," he said. "A letter came for you by the ten o'clock post last night. I intended to send it up by Philippe and forgot. Antoine!" The boy started. "Go and fetch the two letters with foreign stamps on the study chimney-piece."

"Two?" Madame queried, as the boy left the room.

"There is one for Philippe, too. I laid them there to remember, and then for some reason forgot. They were before our eyes while we were talking."

Philip bit his lip. So he had been jesting within a few yards of the letter—while Tony——

Antoine delivered the two letters to their respective owners, and then, completing the circuit of the table, halted by his uncle.

"Well?" said that gentleman, without looking at him.

"Shall I come to you at ten?" he asked.

"Will you have anything to show me, is the question?"

"Yes," said Antoine. "I have done all that."

"Humph. When, may I ask?"

"This morning."

"Ah, very well. Have you anything further to say to me?"

Antoine knew exactly what it was necessary to say. His apology, if a trifle mechanical, had the pretty completeness of which the French language is capable. M. Lemaure accepted it with dignity, and with a gesture dismissed him. The boy turned, and went slowly out into the sunny garden.

"That then is the explanation," said Madame, who had stopped her reading to attend to the little scene. She glanced questioningly at her husband, and then at Philip, but both were silent. "He looks ill," she said doubtfully, following the boy with her eyes. "I wish, Lucien, that you would not give Antoine work to do in the early morning. It cannot be good for him to get up at such impossible hours."

"I give him work he is welcome to do at whatever time he pleases," said Monsieur. "If he chooses to waste his time later in the day, he had better work early. It cannot hurt him if he goes to bed in good time."

"If!" Philip could not resist ejaculating. His uncle turned to him.

"He went to bed last night quite soon enough, if he went when I sent him."

Philip was silent.

"What do you mean, dear?" his aunt inquired. "Was he not asleep when you went up?"

"He was neither asleep nor in bed. I know exactly when he got into bed. It was just three o'clock. I suppose, as he says he has done that stuff this morning, that he got up before seven."

Madame exclaimed in horror.

"Was this perhaps the tardy working of remorse?" her husband suggested to his newspaper. Philip sniffed slightly.

"How do you know when he got into bed?" said Madame. "Did he wake you?"

"I was awake. He slept with me." He coloured as he confessed it. There was a surprised pause.

"Ah," said his uncle. "Then it was your influence that brought him to reason, after all."

"Of course it was," said Madame. She gathered up her letters, and rose; as she passed Philip, she pulled his head back and lightly kissed his dark forelock. Monsieur, whose eye was on her proceedings, made a slight expressive sound.

"Well!" said Madame, challenging him. "Is it not a disgrace, Philippe, that I cannot remain upstairs for two days without those two quarrelling?"

"That," said Monsieur, "is how you express the conduct of a naughty boy."

"It was my intention," said Madame, "to express the conduct of two naughty boys. You know you lost your temper, Lucien. You always do. Well, Philippe kept his—did you not, dearest? And behold—you see." She spread her hands to indicate the reign of the olive-branch.

Philip laughed shortly, in spite of his worry, at this representation of the incident.

"You talk," M. Lemaure took the trouble to point out, "as if the naughtiness of the boy himself were an inevitable evil."

"Ah," said Madame, "I was a naughty girl myself." She sighed softly. "It was excessively agreeable while it lasted, and I remember how tiresome it was to submit. I

felt for that little boy just now. Yet I agree with him," she added, as he was about to speak, "that it is better to do it well when one does it. Oh, I have disconcerted others so often by the grace of my apologies! Artistically, do you see, it is a good effect."

Monsieur did not see: in fact, Madame did not think for a moment that he would. When by any chance he agreed with her, she always regretted it deeply. "In this country, Cécile," he observed, "a good old custom holds that the other side may get, inartistically, a still better effect, by whipping the culprit."

"The English—ah, yes." Madame wrinkled up her nose. "They teach you like that at your ferocious schools, do they not, Philippe? To break the spirit—that is the phrase, is it not? Very well: and when it is broken, what then? Can they mend it again, I wonder? Can you join the ends of your strings when they are broken, Lucien? And what then becomes of the spirit? Such a spirited people, this eh? Tant d'esprit et de verve. Oh, je m'en moque!"

"Do you mind if I saw the paper, sir?" said Philip, as soon as she had gone.

The English newspaper, still folded, lay at his uncle's elbow.

"Pardon," said M. Lemaure, extending it at once. "Evidently I behave like the dog in the fable. Without your Parliament I imagined you did not value it."

"There's a thing I want to look for," Philip hastily explained.

"Crick-ette," said his uncle, who had a great idea he had fathomed the English race, having lived for a year amongst them. He returned to his own reading content with his discernment: and Philip was thankful that he did. "Fatal accident at Vevey," caught his eye at the bottom of the second page he turned. It was badly reported in a couple of lines; but the name Archerson was rightly given, and the date was Wednesday of that week.

Philip, slightly flushed by pure excitement, let the paper slide to the floor, and sat for a minute or so absently twisting with his finger a certain lock at the back of his head, which he always consulted in perplexity. Then he laid hands almost

violently on the letter which lay still unopened before him, and bore it to the privacy of his room.

"You will have seen in the papers," Mrs. Archerson began, "that my boy was drowned by an accident on Wednesday afternoon. I was not there, so I scarcely yet know how it happened. A friend of ours at Vevey has an electric launch, and though it seemed to me too cold for Douglas to go out with him that day, he insisted, and went. He has not been well lately, and I suppose he turned faint or giddy. However it was, on landing he fell from the end of the little pier straight into the deep water. He made no effort, they say, to save himself or swim, and sank instantly. My friend sprang in at once, but owing to some difficulty with the boats moored by the pier, it was some time before he was brought to land, and then it was too late to save him. That was just after four; he never recovered consciousness, and died at eight o'clock.

"I reproach myself now that I did not tell him all the truth. I am justly repaid by what I suffer. If he had known what threatened him he might have been less imprudent. I do not believe in any case I could have kept him for many years, for the doctors were much dissatisfied these last weeks; and this is no doubt a swift and easy death in comparison with what might have been his. They tell me so, and in words I accept it. But reason does not touch us mothers, Philip. From the moment he was driven from school—for foolish causes, no doubt—I felt my reason slipping, though I have guarded it so boastfully. Now with time I may adapt myself, and I trust I may. For the present, God bless you and good-bye."

In a postscript:

"I should like to write to Tony, but I find I cannot. Tell him that Douglas never ceased to be fond of him. I believe all these last weeks he was longing to have him here."

Philip stopped, thinking it over for a long time, his head in his hands. He felt singularly helpless and adrift. Eight o'clock—the very time Tony had said to him: four o'clock, the hour at which his uncle had met him in that wild state of excitement on the stairs. He was terribly sorry for Mrs.

Archerson—he was appalled; but the other problem came obstinately back to oust his sympathy and sorrow. What was the solution of these things? Had he been dreaming himself? Was he going mad as well as Tony?"

Rising at last, he laid the letter carefully among the manuscript papers on Antoine's table. He should read it all—it was his right. Philip was not going to hand him stupid meaningless messages. All the truth there was should be his, dreadful though it was. Then Philip locked the communicating door, and meeting Antoine in the lower hall, he put the key into his hand. The boy understood completely, as it seemed, for he took it with a single word of gratitude before he went on to his deferred lesson in the study.

After that Philip returned to write to Mrs. Archerson. What he wrote he hardly knew, for he did not stop to compose, but wrote in a flash all he had most longed to say for weeks. The letter was probably a remarkable one, for Philip in excitement wrote easily and well. He begged her to send something, just a line, to Antoine himself, and, if she could anyhow do it, to contradict some accusation of Nick's that was troubling him; what it was Philip had no means of knowing, but she might. If she did not write something soon, said Philip, he might go off his head. There he left it suddenly, and signed himself; then closed and addressed it, allowing himself no time for second thoughts, and locked it away with a sigh of relief until he should have a chance to post it securely.

Among other reflections, Philip had arrived at the conclusion that he would do well to tell his aunt the news he had received; but, incorrigibly shy as the subject made him, he put it off all the morning, and was repaid for doing so after lunch.

"Apropos, Philippe," said M. Lemaure, "did you see this in your paper about the accident? I noticed the name, which is an uncommon one, and remarked on it to Antoine before you came in. Where is it—let me see."

"All right," said Philip briefly, "I have seen it."

M. Lemaure glanced at him. He had sent Antoine back to his work some time before, obviously set on his making up for lost time. The boy, who was "tame" and dreamy again, made no objection; but the master, who had lighted a cigarette, was in no hurry to join him.

"I could not discover from Antoine's manner, whether it was likely to be the family he knew, or another."

"It's the same," said Philip.

"You English are so singular," said Monsieur, with a glance at his wife for sympathy. "No one would have guessed he cared for the boy at all. Yet he did, you think—eh?"

"He cared for him a bit," said Philip.

"He was a disagreeable boy," said Madame thoughtfully. "He seemed to me to be rude to everybody, and worst to Antoine. Perhaps, à la fin, the little one resented it." It was a suggestion, but Philip made no response, so she continued. "But I am sorry for the mother, very. She interested me remarkably. It is so strange I should have had a presentiment about her. I recall it clearly now. Will Antoine write, do you think? I should wish him to send a message for me if he does."

"I don't think he will," said Philip, clenching his hand uncomfortably. Every word publicly spoken on the subject seemed to thrust the cloak of reticence further upon him. It seemed strange to him that his aunt, of all people, should set his teeth on edge by the perfectly kind and natural comments she made.

Madame, whose present object was to beguile her husband to linger a little in her society, diverted the talk to more interesting matters. Philip remained in his seat, having a demand to make of his uncle when he could catch a happy moment; and in the conjunction of tobacco and Madame the happy moment seemed probable. Also his aunt was always entertaining to watch, and he was very willing to be distracted from his inward debates. She was on the subject of her reception of the morrow, a fortnightly affair to which she gave much attention, and in which M. Lemaure's musical co-operation was important.

"The salon is so small," said Madame reflectively. "And your instruments sound better in the organ-room, do they not? See then, my friend, I shall feed my world out of doors, if the weather remains so fine, and bring them in there when you are ready. You will not consent to play on the lawn?"

"A string quartette? Certainly not!"

"So I imagined," said Madame. "You regard the health

of your violins so much more than that of your guests. Solid German music, of course? Alas, I would keep it for the winter hours. In the firelight, yes—it is perfect. But with the garden as it is, who wants to go indoors?"

The first-rate music she offered was naturally a chief attraction of her parties; but she wished to incite argument. M. Lemaure's eyebrows went up, a good beginning.

"Personally, I would drop it gladly. What with Falkner's irregularity, and Antoine's silliness, we have nothing really fit to play. Is Lady Croome coming?"

"Certainly. Was it not she who required your new Russian one?"

"These ladies and their requirements," said M. Lemaure, and puffed a little. "Still, if she comes, it is advisable to make an effort, eh?"

"Why trouble?" said Madame, who knew he was set on it. "I mean, if it is a sacrifice for that poor Falkner to come so far—with that huge instrument—fat as he is——"

"And what of *my* sacrifice?" snapped Monsieur. "My single afternoon of rest: no chance to see my guests."

"But you will not miss much," Madame consoled him. "Except Lady Croome, it is the ugly ones to-morrow. Indeed, considering the list, I think I envy you, planted there behind your instruments. Philippe"—she changed the direction of her eyes—"will represent you excellently."

"Sorry," said Philip. "I've got to play tennis with the rector's kids to-morrow. Frightfully old engagement."

"Two seconds old," said Madame. "As if the rector ever allowed Sunday tennis! I cannot possibly do without you, darling. You are invaluable to carry tea in a crowd, since you hold it naturally above one's head. Also Lady Croome is longing to meet you. There is a little nephew of hers who goes to your school next term——"

"Any one but the rector," Philip cut in with feeling. "I couldn't possibly break a promise to the poor old fellow. Beastly sorry, Madame."

"When did you begin to care for the Church, Philippe?" asked his uncle. "Well then, Cécile, that settles it, eh? I abandon the quartette and come to your aid."

"Can the quartette do without you?" said Madame

innocently. "Oh, pardon, I mistook you: you would give it up. Well—I am a poor woman—but I cannot accept such a sacrifice, Lucien. I will do my best alone."

With an air of vast satisfaction, she rose. She was never so happy as when entertaining the entire county, as the males present knew perfectly. Any one unfortunate enough to assist her was liable to overwork at the time, and abuse afterwards.

"Don't worry, dearest," she said, passing Philip. "You shall go to your enchanting rector. After all, Antoine is ten times better in society than you. I will throw Antoine as a sop to Lady Croome when your uncle has finished with him. I have no doubt he will imitate her lisp afterwards, but I cannot help that. Are you going to walk this afternoon, dear?"

"Well, I mustn't lose my form," said Philip, stretching his arms. "Do you mind if I take the kid, sir? He seems a bit stale. You can do without him, can't you?" he added, seeing his uncle's face.

"With the quartette coming to practise? How should I do without him, may I ask?"

"Call it a trio," said Philip crossly—though he did not speak too loud. "What can it matter for once?"

"Excuse me, it matters particularly. He is the last who should be spared, since it is he who has wasted the time. Do without him indeed!" M. Lucien repeated indignantly. "I wish I could. He certainly does not deserve the place, after such behaviour."

"Let him off, then," said Philip, boldly. Then, temporising as his uncle turned: "If he has not time to do it properly, I mean, where's the use?"

"The use," said his uncle with decision, "of necessity. He will have to work the more—and I too, bien entendu. I must find the time somewhere"—he turned to his wife to complain—"to take him through his part in the new one. He is scarcely even note-perfect yet."

"They will never notice," Madame murmured. It was a safe match to the mine. Monsieur instantly exploded.

"What do I care what they notice or what they miss? It is what I notice that matters. If I ever hear you suggest to him to regard his audience——"

"Dearest," said Madame, delighted, "it is the last thing I should suggest. As I have said, they will not be worth regarding, by the eyes of artists such as you and Antoine. I advise you earnestly to look away."

"I will have him look at *me*, or know the reason why." The explosion subsided slowly.

"Yes," said Madame, "even that would be better, poor child. Only, for the sake of all of us, do not look like that."

"Like what ?—you are impossible, Cécile." But he had to melt, and she laughed in triumph.

"That will do," said she. "Now go to the little one, and be gentle with him. I will not have tyrants in my house."

"Psst," said Monsieur passing her. "Is it my fault if you have ?" And therewith he withdrew in very fair good-humour.

Madame would have followed him, but some note in Philip's attitude caught her eye. She never missed the slightest change in him: and when she seemed most careless she noticed most. Unexpectedly now, she came back from the door and slipped her arms round his neck. "Is anything troubling you ?" she asked him. She had the actress's range of tones; but unlike the actress, she had one of her own most natural and soft.

The boy bent his head quickly to kiss her delicate hands, but he did not speak. It surprised him how hard he found it to put any of his difficulty into words. It was all so formless, he felt; and this little aunt, devoted as she was, had such searching critical powers. Somewhere in him moved a dread that she might ridicule what his own instinct held to be serious. That dread, and his shyness, together held him from speech. He sought for expressions, and found none to use.

Madame saw the trouble gather on his brow. Striving herself to help him she ran rapidly in mind over the late conversation. "It is your brother you need for this walk ? You want to talk to him alone, perhaps ?" She recalled how he had managed the boy for her husband. "But he is quite good now, I think. One tells so easily by Lucien's eyebrows how it goes."

"Do you think he's—well ?" It was an immense effort to say it.

"Well—the little boy? Surely. Why, I ask you to notice the lunch he ate."

"I know," said Philip. "He's always hungry." He paused, unwilling himself to point out the difference between the body and the mind—for was not that to admit the mind attacked? Boy-like, he would not face it.

"Possibly," said Madame pensively, "the change from bread and water is attractive. Your uncle imprisoned him, did he not?"

"I think so," said Philip. "But Yvonne fed him," he added, driven to be honest.

"In which case he got jam as well." Madame laughed softly. "That little rebel—but I like it. It must be amusing when he faces Lucien—only one never sees it happen. It is so good for Lucien, too." She sighed. "Well, I must go and rest, unless there are further difficulties, darling?"

"Not enough to prevent your resting," said Philip. It was engagingly said, and she rewarded him for it. More subtly emphasised, the words used might have sounded like a reproach. But Philip was far from reproaching; he only felt her rather remote, and himself a little smaller and more incapable than before. And when she had gone, he shook himself, and went out to walk alone.

It was while he was out that he took the resolution that resulted after supper in his writing another letter. It caused him many doubts even while he wrote, but he got to the end and fastened it up. It was addressed to Paris, to a well-known name, and taken all together, it was in Philip's terms the cheekiest thing he had ever done in his life. To complain to his grandfather of his uncle—that was what it amounted to in brief; on his own responsibility, with no clear charge to offer, to complain and appeal to his uncle's own father! Philip, thinking it over, was really quite surprised at himself. M. Lemaure was strict on certain points of etiquette, particularly within the family, and Philip knew that his confidence in his eldest son was complete and profound. Antoine's somewhat unusual measure of deference to his present master was itself the result of more than one ancient lesson at headquarters, when he had let his young tongue express itself too

freely. M. Lemaure would far sooner suffer disrespect himself than see it offered to one who had been called the least gifted of his sons; and scarcely suspecting the reason, the boys had learnt to reflect the attitude.

In addition to this, the last thing Philip cared to be thought was presumptuous. His vanity erred by preference on the other side. He would much rather let things slide than risk being bidden to mind his business by those he really respected. His grandfather would snub him kindly, but that made it worse, if possible; and the more he turned it over, the more resentment he felt at having to risk it. He glared at the letter lying before him, teasing his lock of hair until it stood rakishly upright. Suppose it should make him really angry, as Tony had made him on the occasion Philip remembered; he felt again the shrinking it had given him to witness it then. Philip's adoration of his grandfather lay at the very root of his existence, and he had never yet had to make him angry. Why he should commit himself to such a possibility without clear necessity shown, was the question he asked his own perturbed feelings.

"Monsieur's letters are ready?" said the voice of Madame's maid behind him.

Philip sighed, abandoned his lock, and addressed the envelope. Then he stamped that and Mrs. Archerson's and offered them to the girl. "That's all," he said. "Thanks awfully, Yvonne."

She had offered to post them for him, and, since she was the one person in the house he trusted as completely as himself, he confided them to her without scruple.

Yvonne, who had taken some milk into Antoine's room, came back to the light to receive them.

"Merci, monsieur. M. Antoine is not come up yet."

"Isn't he?" said Philip, turning. "What time is it—nine? I expect my uncle's keeping him over time for to-morrow."

"The milk will be cold," said Yvonne.

"I'll drink it," said Philip. "You can bring him up some more." He looked at her quizzically as she stood before him. Yvonne Fantec had been his youthful playmate on the Breton sands, and was his own age to a day. He had then bullied

her freely, but now at eighteen things were reversed, and Philip was decidedly afraid of her. She was indeed a character, and at this moment in look and manner she might have been ten years older than the boy she faced. She was a very pretty girl; but though Madame appreciated pretty things about her, Yvonne would not have held her present place a week if she had not been quite as capable as pretty. She was actually as accomplished as many an English earl's daughter, better mannered, and a good deal better dressed. But holding the position of a lady's maid, she was not celebrated beyond the doors of her own household. Within those doors, however, it must be owned, Yvonne made herself felt.

"I'm exhausted, you know," said Philip, becoming pathetic. "I've been working like the deuce; you might bring me something nice too."

Yvonne smiled slightly, glancing down at what she held. "Two letters—and M. Lemaure gave me eleven. Can Monsieur possibly wait till I return? Then I will see what I can find."

"I shall eat the kid's biscuits," threatened Philip. He was aware that he would hear of it if he did.

"The little dog is in there," said Yvonne, turning grave. "If M. Philippe will have the kindness to watch that he does not."

"Did you tell him to trust them?" said Philip lazily. Max, the terrier, was his dog, though it lived by preference with Antoine.

"Yes; but he does not always mind me as he does M. Antoine." With which she softly retired.

Philip, having put Max on trust over Antoine's neglected supper, presently went downstairs, and, book in hand, slipped into the study.

Ths study was a long, comfortable room, that had originally been dignified by the title of music-room, before the noble new hall was built to oust it. It was possible to enter almost unperceived by the occupants, especially when, as at this moment, they were deeply engaged on their own business. It amused Philip sometimes to go in and attend a lesson when he felt lazy himself. There is nothing more piquant than to lie at your ease, and listen to others being drilled in a really drastic and masterly fashion. Besides, he suspected that his

uncle did not greatly object to an audience in any case, for M. Lemaure was serenely persuaded that it was an education to any outsider to hear him teach. Now, as Philip entered, he was in the middle of a lively lecture on the supreme importance and interest of a passage in the first part of the quartette, which, it appeared by Monsieur's comments, Antoine deliberately and malignantly persisted in rendering as if it was an exercise.

"It is not the same thing, though you may think so, to practise and to play. You tell me it is difficult." (This dramatic form was a favourite, though it need not be said few pupils of his ever volunteered a remark in his presence.) "Difficult! Well, be it so; granted it is difficult. Then you must practise it ten, twenty, a hundred times, till you could do it in your dreams. Of course; but is it finished then? Bah—it is not even begun! Then you must begin to think of playing it. Play!" Monsieur slapped the page for emphasis, as he spoke: "Do you understand the word? It must *grow* out of the composition like a flower on its stem; not be *pinned* on like the—the toy on a child's Christmas-tree." The scorn in the phrase was superb.

"Now," his speech presently reached its conclusion. "Begin again at the beginning, and let us get this right. Half an hour at this one line; it becomes absurd."

However, it was anything but at an end yet. Time after time, Tony was pulled up at the same point, just as he was beginning to warm to the spirit of the music, and time after time he was sent back to the beginning again. Philip's own nerves could scarcely stand it at last. His uncle, who walked restlessly about the room as the performance proceeded, came several times down to his end, and stood right in front of him, frowning, gesticulating and exhorting. He prudently kept his eyes on the book, and feigned complete abstraction; but such efforts were needless. Monsieur paid him not the smallest attention. At last, in response to Philip's silent prayers, the crucial point was passed with no more comment than a grunt from the impatient little gentleman; and the tide flowed smoothly on to the still waters at the close of the first movement. Philip thought his uncle could not but praise; nothing was further from his thoughts.

"That was a little better," he observed. "Now, we will have it again with the proper tempo if you please. I believe it is an occasion of festivity to-morrow, and not of a funeral."

Philip winced and thought instantly. "He will strike now."

But Tony's training had been very thorough. From his mother's earliest lessons he had never expected to be spared by any member of the family who taught him—unless indeed it was the greatest member of it. "From the beginning?" was all he said.

"Of course," said his uncle, and he began again.

He was giving all he had to the task now; and after a few minutes M. Lucien came down the room slowly, and took a seat not far from Philip. He leant back and shaded his face while he listened, and it struck the boy with sudden sympathy to notice how tired he looked. Indeed, he was using up one of the few intervals in a hard day's work, and he had been sparing himself less than Antoine. Once or twice he turned round to his pupil with, as it were, the beginning of a gesture to stop him; but he abandoned it again and resumed his former attitude. The "flowery" passage came and passed: Monsieur was looking thoughtfully out of the window. In the absolute silence of the room the music had a weird effect, as of a flickering flame. It was an underpart of course, always suggesting, seldom asserting, though Antoine made the most of it when it did. It was ceaselessly broken by little pauses, which Philip's ear, unlike theirs, could not fill. At the end the flow was continuous, and it died peacefully in the long chords of the close.

"Go on," said M. Lemaure, as the performer paused, and he signalled silently to Philip to pass him his own violin, which he had not touched. At the same instant he turned up the light above Antoine's head, for it had grown dark. The boy frowned a little at the sudden glare, as he tuned up his strings for the andante. Philip and his uncle remained in the half-light, and Tony was plainly unconscious of the presence in the room of any one but his redoubted master.

"You will play the first part, sir?" he said, noticing the violin.

"No, I play the second. Take the upper line."

Antoine made no protest; he realised the honour as the

reward of his efforts, and flushed a trifle. But the colour vanished quickly as he turned back to his work.

Ths second division was practically a solo for the chief instrument, to the running accompaniment of the other strings: M. Lemaure merely indicated this to support the boy's part, putting it in sotto voce, entirely from memory, as though for his own satisfaction. The melody was big and satisfying, and Antoine, though a little unsteady at first, soon let himself go. Philip no longer pretended to read the book on his knee, settling comfortably with his arms above his head. If they were really going to play, he might as well enjoy it.

Towards the end, M. Lucien abandoned his accompaniment and watched the performer critically, tugging his moustache. At the end of all he quietly rose.

"That," he said, "was a somewhat peculiar finish."

In the last few bars Antoine had stumbled rather heedlessly, and he made two shots at the final chord, and even then failed to hold it. It was a strange effect in its childish impotence after the solid beauty he had lately created. M. Lemaure had no idea, indeed, but to suspect the violin.

"What happened?" he said. "That string—is it going to break?—ah!"

The string snapped in the boy's face, and his uncle snatched the precious instrument with an exclamation; for Antoine, starting violently back, simply let it go.

"Careless!" the master ejaculated. "What are you thinking of, boy? If I had not been at hand—there, stupid, it is all right." For he saw the little shock had upset him; holding by the chimney-piece, he was clearly fighting a strong inclination to cry.

"The breaking of one string!" Monsieur mocked to brace him. "Is that enough. at this time of day,to destroy a performance? If we were in a concert-room now, with an audience."

Just as it happened, there was an audience. Philip had risen to his feet, biting his lip, but quite unable to gather the force to interfere. No one but Madame interfered with his uncle—or so in his ignorance he imagined.

"If Monsieur would permit M. Antoine to come to bed," said the soft voice of the maid Yvonne behind. "His supper is waiting."

The master of the house turned about quickly, for he had not heard her enter. She now stood composed and pretty as usual, in the centre of the room. M. Lemaure never doubted for an instant it was a message from his wife that was thus delivered. He wavered, and looked at his watch.

"Tschah, it is late," he said. "I had lost the time."

"Yes, monsieur," Yvonne assented, her eyes on Antoine.

Monsieur glanced dubiously at the music, still so far from being finished. He flipped the pages over, and then relinquished it with a tap.

"Well, well, you had better go," he said rather grudgingly. "We must leave the last to chance, I suppose. If no other strings break—hein ?—we may get through."

He drew the boy to him kindly enough.

"Stupid," he said again, seeing the tears on his face. "If at our age we grow afraid of our instruments, what is left ? Very little, I think."

Obviously very little, for Antoine was helpless. Monsieur, who still flattered himself that his late application owed its origin to remorse, grew quite benevolent at the sight of tears. "To-day," he went so far as to say, "I have been content with you, mon petit," and so embraced and dismissed him.

"You are clever, Yvonne," said Philip, with genuine admiration, when she came up to him to bring the refreshment promised.

Yvonne laid the things she had brought out carefully. "While men remain so stupid," she said softly when she had finished, "one must do what one can."

III

THE earlier part of Sunday passed very quietly. As not infrequently happened in that house, the brothers hardly met. Antoine, being at liberty, vanished all the morning; and Pihlip was necessarily driven into retreat by the guests in the afternoon. He did not go to the Rectory, as need not be stated, but to one of his favourite corners in the woods, taking with him a provision of magazines, his camera, and such share of the reception dainties as Yvonne could be persuaded to allow him; he also took Max, whose white nose grew rapidly ochre-coloured, in exploring the upper part of countless rabbit-holes; for Philip, unlike Antoine, had no care for his education and no sympathies for possible young rabbits, and left him delightfully to his own devices. Philip was also happy in his own way, and succeeded for quite a long period in forgetting Tony and all attendant bothers. When his watch and the evening light assured him he was safe, he returned to the house and sought his aunt. Of course he never hoped for a moment that his absence would escape her, and it was just as well to take the bull by the horns without delay.

Madame was lying exhausted on her couch in the pretty shaded drawing-room.

"The rector," announced Philip, entering, "is very well, and he sent his love."

"I am aware he is well," said Madame. "He was here; of the love, however, I did not observe any signs."

"You mean he came?" said Philip, stopping. "To-day? Well, that's one to you, Madame."

"I met him in the morning," she explained, "coming out of his church, and looking so pleasant after the sermon. So I besought him to come. I said his presence would make such a difference to me."

"Did it?" asked Philip.

"Immense, darling. More than your absence. Mon Dieu—but I am thankful it is over."

"Did those hags keep you standing all the time?" said

Philip, approaching the sofa. She was not at all a person to complain, though the energy of her spirit constantly overdid her fragile body. At this minute she looked, and was, tired out. She took Philip's hand as he stood beside her.

"Ingrat," she said, looking up at him. "To how many of the hags was I forced to make your excuses? And you who had left me none to make!"

"Never mind," said Philip, "what are a few lies more or less? You know you like doing it. Well—so every one loved you, and it was a flaring success—as usual."

"As usual," Madame assented. "Lady Croome was enraptured, and your uncle was an angel."

"Was he?" said Philip, a trifle astonished.

"Ah, how I admire him! The way he annexed the only agreeable woman the whole afternoon—and then the way he bore Antoine. Antoine is really naughty, though he makes one laugh."

"Laugh?" Philip raised his brows. What was coming now?

"He changes so," said Madame. "Would you believe it?—he had the real stage-fright. Incredible for him, is it not? Yet it was plainly that, for I observed him myself. When every one had arrived, and was beginning to think of the music—no little boy. At last, since the servants fail, I go to summon him, there in his room. No, he will not. He hates the people, he hates their faces, he cannot play, he will not come: and that information I am to carry to your uncle, who has already placed the chairs!"

"Well?" said Philip.

"Lucien's face—it was delicious! The composure before the world, you see, he could not storm. Ah," said Madame pensively. "I enjoyed that moment. There is nothing to be done, I tell him sweetly. Having acquaintance with the disease, I inform him that no help is possible. Panic is to be pitied, not cured. 'Panic?' says he. 'Obstinacy! One child's obstinacy to disappoint the whole room. One moment, and I will go myself!' 'Do not beat him,' I supplicate, and return to the lawn. There on the steps I meet Antoine, quite collected. 'All right,' he says to me. 'I am coming.' And while I yet stare, vanished into the music-room. Is he not an oddity?"

"That was all then?" said Philip.

"After that he behaves well, plays charmingly, eats an enormous tea, and amuses these ladies to distraction. Lady Croome was charmed by him. Oh, my friend—*you* were never missed."

But Philip had no leisure to be jealous just then.

"Was my uncle down on him?" he demanded.

"Not at the time, you understand. He bore it all without a sign. Wonderful, I thought him. Then, afterwards, when we had got rid of all but the players the little one approaches, blames himself—taking the words out of Lucien's mouth—and demands to go to his room; anticipating the master, who had the intention to send him there: the rest of the quartette looking on at it, if you please. 'And you shall lock me in,' says monsieur, just as though it was what he most desired. So, as his dignity had no choice, my husband does so, and I remain trying to keep my face before ces messieurs. Really, Antoine would make his fortune on the stage; his little flippant manner was superb for its purpose. At times one can hardly follow his changes."

Philip seemed to agree; indeed, he was more puzzled than ever. He could not see how or where—or indeed whether—the situation was to end. The boy's moods seemed to have no connection with one another, or with their cause; there was no grief, no appeal for pity, nor even clear sign of its need; nothing but this bewildering excitement in all its chameleon forms. He supposed vaguely that it would work off by degrees, but he felt no special longing to witness the stages; nor could he find room for amusement, like his aunt.

He had no idea how soon the crisis was to come.

It became clear to the fond observers of M. Lemaure during the evening that he was in a difficulty. He had not intended to banish Antoine for the whole evening, and he had carefully not, as requested, locked the door. But Antoine chose to remain upstairs not only during supper-time, but afterwards. To send up elaborately to release him, and then be refused—as seemed only too possible by such an ingenious criminal—was not suitable to one's dignity. Nevertheless, one wanted, as always on a Sunday evening, to play the organ; and

Antoine, an almost necessary accessory to this proceeding made his absence felt.

M. Lemaure became exceedingly indignant and irritable when he failed to appear; and Philip, coming down at nine, and discovering by a hint from his aunt the state of affairs, took pity on him.

"The kid's gone to bed, hasn't he, sir? Were you wanting to play? Shall I come and stop for you?"

"You are not busy?" said Monsieur.

"No; if I am not worse than nobody."

"You're better than nobody," said his uncle: who admitted Philip's intelligence, though he regarded him musically as the sentimentalist, or the sham—two interchangeable terms.

Thus for some hours, M. Lucien was really happy. His splendid new organ, the gift of his wife, was the centre of this country home. With that and the ancient church music his soul loved, he became quite a different being; quiet, immersed and tolerant of those in his neighbourhood. His affection for Antoine, quite a real thing in spite of their tussles, dated from these confidential hours by the organ. Indeed he loved to have a young human being at his side, for M. Lemaure "cadet" was an educationist ingrain; as fast as he had an idea, it was his desire to hand it on and make it profitable, which is the true educational instinct. Even his playing had always a little the air of a demonstration to his less respectful hearers. "Do you see?" his sharp look seemed to say at the end of each fragment. Antoine's way of taking such instruction was different from Philip's, and not always so satisfactory. But Tony was a polite and pleasant companion, and there were mild moods in which his ideas in return amused his uncle, who allowed himself to entertain them jestingly.

Philip, on the other hand, was sedate and impressed. To-night the style of music but vaguely appealed to him: but it made him, as children would say, "feel good"; and on Sunday evening he was quite willing to feel good for a time, and, while his uncle waked the echoes in the big shadowy room, to think out some of his immediate plans and prospects in life. Philip had a strong vein of sentiment in him, which he did not object at such hours to let loose; and when at last

M. Lemaure had had enough, when they had turned out the lights, locked up the temple, and issued into the star-lighted, sweet-scented garden, he was glad that his uncle chose to linger a little, and stroll up the grass path between his wife's cherished late roses.

M. Lemaure smoked and listened to some of Philip's notions with interest, though he did not say much on his side. He thought him a nice boy, and very English, with his stiffness and his sentiment and his solemn utter belief in himself. He liked probing a little the depths in Philip, though it was principally to prove his own theories in so doing. The Frenchman was aware that, at his age, he had had whole acres of knowledge of which this boy knew nothing; and he marvelled often, at such moments of confidence, how he could be at once so clever and so ignorant, so warm-hearted and so passionless, so certain of his methods and so incorrigibly shy in his dealings; in fact, as he summed it up, so much the son of James Edgell his old antagonist. But the end of all was that he liked Philip for being young, while he was impatient of his youth; and it was quite late before he reconciled himself to driving him indoors.

"Is that the window of your room, Philippe?" he asked apropos of nothing, just before they turned the corner of the house.

"Which?" asked Philip surprised.

"With the light."

The outline of the house was dim against the stars. Philip rapidly reckoned the relative position of the lighted upper window in question. "It can't be mine," he said. "I didn't leave the light on. It's Tony's."

"I thought so," said Monsieur. "Did you not tell me he was in bed? Then what is he doing with the light?"

Philip knew quite well what he was doing; he dodged the truth, though, instinctively.

"Perhaps he's reading," he said. "He's been sleeping badly this last week."

"Fancy," said Monsieur. "Nonsense, at his age, and I will not have it; that is why he works badly by day. You are going to bed?" They had reached the house. "Well, tell him to turn his light out at once and go to sleep, or I shall be extremely angry."

Philip went upstairs, and tried his brother's door. It was locked within, so he rapped sharply.

"It's me. Monsieur says you're to go to bed at once, or you'll jolly well catch it. Do you hear?"

No answer. Only a little whine from the shaggy Max, who was stretched against the door, watching it and sniffing sadly.

"Poor old boy," said Philip, touching him. "Turned you out, did he? Beastly unsociable he is to-night. Well, we'll jolly well go in, won't we. You wait a minute."

Max lifted one ear to his official master; he respected Philip, but his feeling to Antoine went far beyond respect. His eyes and nose did not move from the crack.

"Tony," said Philip. "Open the door. Max wants to come in."

After a long pause, Tony unlocked it. He looked white and elated and his eyes were brilliant.

"Bother you are," he jerked irritably. "What do you want?"

"Monsieur says——"

"I heard."

"Well, aren't you going to?"

"No, I'm not. Come in, Max."

He held the door sufficiently open for the dog, markedly excluding Philip. However, Philip was equal to that game; he pushed in with ease, held the boy back with one hand, and took possession of the key. Tony promptly retired to the table, as to an inner intrenchment. Philip saw he was in for a battle so he determined to be very reasonable, that being the best course to pursue with the insane. He set a knee in the armchair, folded his arms on the top, and prepared to deliver a sermon as from a pulpit.

"Look here," it began. "You can't keep this up, so where's the use? Man can't do without sleep. You'll make yourself really ill, if you've not already done it. This infernal affair has upset you, I know, and I'm very sorry for you—that's a fact. But there's no sense in brooding over it now—and what's more, it's wrong."

The sermon had reached this impressive point when it occurred to him that the object of it was not listening. He was gazing down at a page of his manuscript in deep abstraction.

Philip suddenly abandoned the pulpit, strode forward, and swept together the closely written sheets with which the table was scattered.

"If you don't do as you are told this minute, I'll take this straight down to him."

When he had said it, he was afraid; for the boy's dark eyes, at close quarters, dilated strangely. He panted a little as he stood.

"You—you will *not*."

"Well, are you going to do as you're told?"

"Give it to me. It is mine."

"Tony, *are* you going to do as you are told?"

"No!" he shot the answer defiantly. "I will finish that first. Perhaps I may die, or you—or my uncle. What is that? I wish he would. I do not want him. I finish that now, here, just as I like. Oh please!" his voice broke pitifully, "give it to me quick."

"No. Give it to me, Philippe."

A dry French voice behind repeated his words, and M. Lemaure advanced into the room. It had not occurred to Philip that he would take the trouble to go back into the garden and keep a watch on the window to be sure that his orders were carried out.

Antoine flung himself on the precious papers—but too late. M. Lemaure had taken them coolly from Philip's limp hand, and, spreading them out on the table, proceeded to examine them at leisure.

"Interesting," was his comment. "So this is what you do instead of giving your mind to your proper work. I might have known there was some such nonsense going on. Seven—eight parts—mon Dieu! when you can scarcely write three correctly; when your exercises are as full of faults as a sponge is full of holes. Here is a composer, my faith! Look at him."

The scorn of his incisive voice cut the boy, already overwrought, almost like a knife. He leant back with one hand on the table to support him, clenching the other up against his chest as though in severe bodily pain. Instinctively dramatic though he always was, it did not seem at all a natural attitude.

Philip, who to this point had been paralysed by the unforeseen thunderbolt, made a movement to intervene. M. Lemaure turned on him instantly.

"And you—you encourage him. You knew of this nonsense, and you said no word. You knew he was wasting the hours of needful rest over this rubbish. Go!—I thought you had more sense, Philippe. You are babies, both of you—senseless children."

M. Lemaure's explosion was over; he was cooling slowly. He came to earth from the heights of his wrath, and he became aware of Tony's white face.

"Have you anything to say to me, Antoine?" he said more gently.

There was a pause.

"You cannot take it," the boy gasped in a voice not his own. "It is mine—my own. You could not do it. No one could do it but me. You must—you must give it back to me."

His uncle waited a moment.

"What is yours, is mine," he then said slowly. "You are a child, and you are my pupil. If you can write anything at all, it is I who have taught you. Until I set you free, you are my apprentice, and must do my work; no other. Do you see?"

He was exercising extreme self-control as he spoke.

"No!" Tony looked him in the face. "You have not taught me this. No one at all can teach me. You!" The tone of the last word and the smile that accompanied it struck M. Lucien dumb. "It is *me*." His clenched hand dropped on the table, clutching it. "And her," he added, though breath failed him to be audible. But his brother understood.

"Tony! don't!" he said in low entreaty. But his uncle stopped him as he tried to move forward.

"Not a word, Philippe," he said, with all his dignity. "That is enough, Antoine," he added quietly, turning to him. "That is really quite insolence enough for one evening. You are mad to-night. To-morrow I will speak to you. Go, Philippe." Then, as Philip hung doubtful, "Go," he repeated more sharply, "and—call that dog."

The shaggy terrier, Max, head down and limp ears drooping at such unwelcome summons, crept a little way after Philip. He gave the smallest whine of protest.

"Don't take him," said Antoine, starting. "Max! Come back!" His voice had a sound of panic.

"Tschah!" M. Lemaure ejaculated in disgust; but his dramatic exit was already spoiled. As Max turned to the beloved voice, M. Lemaure shoved him irritably with his foot. He could not consider a dog at the minute, and he wished to get rid of him, so he kicked. Max gave a yelp, and Antoine an almost simultaneous cry of rage. In a flash he flung himself on the dog, and, catching it up with the careless ease of the born animal-lover, clasped it up to him where he stood.

It would have been easy to leave it so, and more dignified undoubtedly; but the boy's whole behaviour was a challenge to authority, and the little tyrant in M. Lemaure came to the top.

"It is your dog, is it not, Philippe?" he said. "Kindly bring it away. I will not have a dog here."

Philip hesitated a moment. There was really no choice in the circumstances, and he had the sense to realise it, and to act promptly. He walked up to the pair.

"Beastly sorry, Tony," he said. "Let go; I don't want to hurt you." He spoke sadly and gently; and with one look up at him Antoine laid Max in his arms.

"Don't let—let him be hurt, then," he said choking; and turning away as they shut the door, he dropped face downwards upon his bed.

Philip laid the white dog in his chair, where it cowered mutely, and turned.

"You won't destroy it, sir?" he said. He was slightly flushed, and his voice shook a little. His beauty was striking at the moment, but it was not that that his uncle noticed.

"I shall do with it exactly what it suits me," was his cool answer. "You have the key of this room?"

Philip, who had been unaware that he still held it, offered the key in silence.

Monsieur locked the door with it, dropped it in his pocket, and left the room without further words. But out on the staircase he halted, and said to himself: "Mon Dieu—Henriette!"

And as he went on down, he felt, it must be owned, most uncomfortable.

IV

MADAME LEMAURE had a headache consequent upon her efforts of the day before. She slipped downstairs late in the day, and lay languidly in her cool drawing-room, secure from the intrusion of her friends, for Yvonne had received instructions. Yvonne could be so perfectly trusted, Madame thought with relief, as she closed her eyes to the world and courted sleep. The scent of her roses was wafted in from without, and the light air now and again scattered petals upon her from a bowl of them that lay at her side, which a single hot day had overblown.

At last she really did doze a little; and, re-opening her eyes, was greatly surprised to find a visitor in the room, Yvonne's figure at the door meanwhile announcing tranquilly:

"Pardon, Madame, M. Lemaure."

Was it a joke? Yvonne was not given to jokes in company. She stared quite helplessly, incapable of a movement of welcome. The visitor meanwhile, who was old and limped slightly in walking, crossed slowly to her side.

"Do not move, my dear," he said. "I am ashamed to disturb you. I have come on business with my son, but I could not refuse myself the pleasure of a word in passing."

"Mon pêre!" Madame gasped, quite amazed. Was she dreaming?

"I was in England," said M. Lemaure. "There are so many trains from London—why not? London is unspeakable—oh, very ugly: I think of the country, I catch a train—it is done. Forgive me, Cécile—and lie still."

He bent towards her as she strove to rise. She was a great favourite of his, and his persuasions had been largely instrumental in her marriage. For there had been a time, before the humorous possibilities of Lucien became evident, when the little lady had rebelled strongly against her parents' choice, had indeed been heard to declare in public that she would rather marry the father than the son. They could

afford to laugh at the time of rebellion now, but they had never ceased to be friends.

"But it is ravishing," said Madame, clasping her hands. "You stay a week."

"No, no; not a night."

"A week," said Madame, drawing a chair up to her side. "The garden is perfect. You are safe here from letters, pupils, the newspapers, everybody. I will talk to you all the time."

"Charming," said the visitor. "But in a week I must be at home, and to-morrow I must be in London."

"Must!" said Madame lightly, and flipped a rose-petal off her skirt. That, the action signified, was how she disposed of must. "See—you are old, are you not?"

"Quite old," he assented.

"Well, there is no must for the quite old, or the quite young. Your musts are long past, cher pêre. Oh, you will see." She nodded, confident of her powers.

"Lucien is at home to-day?" he suggested.

"In his study, I think. This is not a day for pupils. I have not seen him yet. My day," she smiled prettily, "has had no morning. Do you know those tiresome days?"

"Poor child," he said gently. "Yet how many of our days are whole days, after all?" He paused dreamily a moment, then gripped himself. "There are few of us at whom the sun cannot smile," he said; and his own smile, flashing out, seemed to gather to itself all the lines of his face, betraying it at once as one of the faces originally made for mirth, though life had overlaid it with some slight network of care.

"Where are the boys?" he said after a pause.

"Philippe is out, walking leagues as usual."

"They are well?"

"Pretty well," said Madame. "He grows so fast, and of course over-exerts himself, en anglais. How pleased he will be!"

"I hope so," said M. Lemaure, smiling at her thoughtfully. "And the other?"

"Antoine—let me see—he is upstairs. Lucien and he——" she shrugged. "Really I lose hope, they quarrel so."

"Quarrel?"

"I think Antoine charming when he is impudent," said Madame. "Lucien does not find him so. He tries to hammer him to the shape that suits him, you understand. You might as well hammer the ocean! He breaks out on every side. It is beautiful to see Lucien's disappointment over it."

"You have had this spectacle lately?" said M. Lemaure, caressing the roses absently.

"A little. But it seems they annoy one another most in private."

"The causes—you do not know?"

"I cannot follow them, indeed; childish, probably. I tell them they are infants both. If they would think before they speak—but pouf!" She spread a little gesture, smiling at him side-long.

"The Lemaure tongue," said the head of that name. "Possibly, then, I must scold Antoine since I have come. May I see him?"

"Oh, I imagine so." Madame put her hand to the bell in reach. "Yvonne, will you inform M. Antoine of——" Her pretty gesture supplied the rest.

Yvonne waited an instant. "Pardon, Madame, I shall go to Monsieur then for the key? M. Antoine's door is locked."

"Tiens!" said Madame with a half laugh. "This is worse than I thought. Wait—I will ask Lucien, mon pêre."

"Never!" The old man put a hand upon her, as he rose rather painfully. "I have wearied you as it is. Leave your infants to me, Cécile, if I may assume them."

"After all," said Madame, laying her little hand gratefully in his, "they are both yours, are they not?"

"Both? You have forgotten already that I gave you one?" He looked down on her a minute. "Perhaps one is still mine, however," he said, pressed her hand, and left her to rest.

The master of the house was engaged in looking over a pile of his pupil's papers. It was the hour of Antoine's lesson, but he had it to himself, for the boy was still a rebel and a prisoner. M. Lucien was weary and worried: he had had

another stormy interview with him in the morning, hoping to find him with somewhat recovered reason after a night's rest. But Antoine had not rested, and he was not reasonable: in fact he was decidedly rude. So his uncle gave him up, and left him locked in in disgrace.

Philip had been morose at breakfast, and had vanished soon after, declaring simply that he would not be home till late; so, as Madame remained invisible, M. Lucien had been practically alone all day.

Into this solitude came his father, like a visitor from the stars. M. Lucien made a point of seeing his father once a year, partly because he loved him, partly by way of example to younger members of the family, who were not so scrupulous. But a descent like this was unheard-of, for, with Lucien especially, his father was always careful to regard formalities.

He apologised now with the same care he had used to Madame, but it was quite unnecessary. Lucien was proud and enchanted to see him, no one could have doubted that for an instant. He even knocked the whole neat pile of his papers on to the floor, and left them there unheeded, while he stood beside his chair, to ask and supply the family news.

Eventually they came to Antoine of course: "My boy," M. Lemaure said, and his son, unlike Madame, had no doubt which boy he meant. He explained the circumstances with great dignity and care.

"He has been ungovernable for some days; last night he was insolent."

"Insolent? To you?"

"No other word," said M. Lucien, "is possible. I am sorry that it should be so at the time of your visit, too rare as your visits are; but——" The master shrugged. "Is it my fault?" said the shrug.

"Perhaps I may speak to him," said M. Lemaure politely.

"Of course." M. Lucien summoned Yvonne, and handed her the key. Yvonne's colour rose a trifle as she took it. No other key in the house, she had long since ascertained, fitted that door.

"Tell him," said M. Lucien briefly, "to come down to me at once."

"I seem to know that girl's face," said M. Lemaure considering.

"She is one of the Breton Fantecs. Can you really remember? James interested himself in them because the mother nursed Philip. He recommended this child to Cécile as the cleverest; they are all bright."

"Yes, to be sure." He was satisfied.

"A pretty girl, eh?" said his son with a slight twinkle

"Very; there is much in her face." They spoke of other things until Yvonne returned.

"Pardon, Monsieur. M. Antoine says——"

"That he will not come," her master anticipated her. It was clear by her face.

"No, Monsieur." There was a pause.

"Shall I go up there?" M. Lemaure the elder suggested. In his own house, his son's authority stood supreme. Nothing would have induced him to interfere without strong reason shown.

"Certainly not," said M. Lucien with indignation. "Excuse me, father," he added instantly, "but it is absurd. You have to climb the whole house for a naughty boy. I will go myself sooner." He turned. "Yvonne—have the kindness to inform M. Antoine that I give him five minutes in which to obey me—only five."

Yvonne turned with the very slightest, almost invisible smile.

"Excuse me," said the old man. "Mlle. Yvonne: have the kindness to give him at the same time—that." He put into her hand a small silver key, which he had slipped off his watch-chain. Then he leaned back and waited; his son walked restlessly to and fro, with an occasional eye to the clock. His father could not avoid an internal question as to what next step in discipline he contemplated. Lucien had always interested him greatly, and he had never known him yet hesitate for want of a prepared plan. He felt sure he had one now.

They had not to wait long, for Yvonne was swift. She swung into the room with the same easy step as before, suggesting the gait of one barefoot on the sands.

"M. Antoine cannot come here, Monsieur," said she to the

master. Then she flung back her head and addressed the older man without the respectful formula. "You will come to him," she said, "if you are real."

M. Lucien gave an exasperated sigh. His father rose to face him. "My son," he said, "I cannot be an invention, even of yours. You will allow me to go, and to see what it is necessary to do." He waited anxiously.

"As you will," said M. Lucien, making way for him formally Every inch of him said, to an unseen public: "You see, my father's wish is a command."

Outside, M. Lemaure turned to Yvonne, who advanced to offer him her strong young arm. "I thank you," he said, as he took it, "for bringing me his words correctly."

The tears rose in the girl's eyes.

"Monsieur," she said, "he has been ill for a week."

"There is a doctor near here?" said the old man, pausing.

"Madame's doctor comes this evening."

"Good. That will do." He was going slowly up the last flight, when he turned to her again.

"Where is the violin?" he asked.

Yvonne hesitated in doubt. "Monsieur's?"

"Madame's," said M. Lemaure. Then with a smile: "My daughter's."

"Ah, Dieu merci!" The girl's face flushed all over. "It is below there in the music-room. I will get it for Monsieur."

M. Lemaure nodded, dropped her arm, and climbed on alone.

Philip, when he entered his room after six, found his grandfather in occupation; and beside him on the table Antoine's violin, with its bow alongside, as though lately in use. He had learnt from his aunt in passing of his presence in the house, so that the shock was lessened.

M. Lemaure put up a quick warning hand as the boy entered, and he shut the door very softly behind him. Then, being obviously too tall for the situation, he knelt down and received his grandfather's embrace and blessing.

"Is it all right?" he asked, eagerly and low.

M. Lemaure shook his head.

"He is asleep, though—really?"

"Yes, but not too soundly, so speak low. Is it long since he slept?"

"Days," said Philip briefly. His grandfather scanned his face.

"I have informed the doctor," he said.

"You think him ill, then?"

"Ill? Do you not perceive how changed he is? Most certainly he is ill."

"It has been an awful time," said Philip, with a short sigh. "I think—I was getting frightened."

"I think," said M. Lemaure, "that I guessed it. I came to take my share."

"Grandpapa!" Philip hid his face in his arm against the chair, for he was now sitting on the floor. "Oh—I felt such a sneak! Before my aunt and everybody, all the time."

"A sneak," M. Lemaure repeated reflectively. "Yes, I believe I felt that, too; at least, there is a sense of conspiracy. Did I lie to your aunt lately, I wonder? How many misleading statements make a lie, Phil? There was something about affairs in London, and my love of the country—both facts, as it happens, for I always have affairs in London, to which I never attend—but not at all the reasons of my visit."

"You're old enough to know better," said Philip, half-laughing, though he took care not to raise his head. The double relief of this strong support and tenderness in one nearly overcame him. It was really fortunate that a French grandfather was so indifferent to weakness of this nature. M, Lemaure let him recover without remark: indeed, he had spoken at length to give him time.

"You have been playing, sir?" said Philip presently.

"I played to him a little, yes. I could think of nothing better to soothe him. Thank heaven," he added, "I have little rheumatism in my hands as yet. I did not play so badly as one might think."

"I dare say you didn't," said Philip, indignantly seizing the hand referred to. "Did he like it?"

"I cannot say. I think it reached him, for he seemed quieter." M. Lemaure smiled suddenly. "It distressed the little dog in proportion," he observed.

"Max! Did you take him in? I tried for half an hour to make him come out with me."

"He had reached there before I came. He was close by, imploring to be noticed, eyes and tail. I tried to console him."

"You mean Tony didn't?" Philip turned his head.

"He cannot, no. He barely noticed me. For the moment," said M. Lemaure, "he has no love left to give."

"Not to you?" Philip was almost shocked. "When you have come on purpose—didn't he realise?"

M. Lemaure shook his head.

"No reason either, you see. His store, I mean, of thinking and feeling are spent. If one reflects on what that means—and with such as Bébé——" For one instant hot indignation flashed in his face and voice, and he rose to his feet on the hearth. He looked down upon his grandson, clearly impatient to examine him; but impulsive as he naturally was, some innate sense of justice held his tongue. M. Lemaure's own feeling, though a strong flood, was never quite oblivious of reason. The highest-tempered art is a finely compounded thing—impulse alone never rules it, attractive though that theory may be. The rules by which M. Lemaure governed himself in art, he applied quite naturally to other government, such as that of sons and grandsons. The boy before him was clever, he knew; but he was young, and it seemed unfair to try him too much in such a situation of delicacy as this undoubtedly was. M. Lemaure preferred to pin his faith in science; and, gathering up his patience, of which during a long life he had amassed a certain store, he resolved to wait.

He was repaid for the effort when the doctor came, and before an hour was out got all the truth he needed.

Madame's doctor, selected chiefly because he was a near neighbour, was a young man, sandy-haired and shy. Madame trusted and admired him warmly, chiefly because she could make him do exactly as she told him; for Dr. Scott was decidedly afriad of the Frenchwoman and her charms. With men, however, he was far better; and M. Lemaure liked him on sight, only thankful that a blunt manner brought him swiftly to the point.

In the character of a neighbour with dogs, he knew Tony a little; and after gathering somewhat the state of the case, he asked pointedly to see the boy alone. Ten minutes sufficed him for the call, and he marched back into the drawing-room looking distinctly vexed.

"Well?" said M. Lucien, who in order not to waste the time

was writing letters at his wife's table. "Is it anything?" He had deferred much against the grain to this fad of his father's. Even if Antoine were ill, which he discredited, he thought less than nothing of English country doctors.

"Nothing except that his nerves are all to pieces," said the young man rather gruffly. "A case of neglect, if you'll excuse my saying so. Quite unintentional, ah—I dare say." He looked towards Madame and blushed. "These cases need careful handling, don't you know: and they must be taken in time, or it causes such needless suffering to the—ah, all round."

"Who has been suffering," said M. Lucien, "in this instance?"

Dr. Scott turned on him.

"Can you look at that boy and tell me he has not suffered?" He swung to the elder M. Lemaure. "You have eyes, perhaps," the movement said.

"I see a change," he answered the mute appeal. "But then, I arrive from outside."

"He has had a shock?"

"So I hear from Philip. The death of a friend."

"That?" said M. Lucien, in real surprise. "He hardly seemed to feel it."

"Death, at that age, affects in many ways," was his father's response, absently given.

"Hum, yes," Science agreed. "He has been exerting his brain? Over-straining himself in any way?"

M. Lemaure silently referred the question to his son.

"Certainly not, for me," said that gentleman with decision. "Anything but it. He has done as little work as he could for a week past."

"Humph." The doctor frowned. "He is nervous naturally, of course. Imaginative, and so on." He indicated the spiritual qualities in general, and with the air of an amateur in them.

"Very," said M. Lemaure quietly. He could at any rate answer that.

"His temper is nervous in the extreme," said M. Lucien, punching little holes in Madame's blotting-paper with the pencil in his hand.

"Temper, ha!"

"Antoine is sweet-tempered as a rule," the grandfather observed.

The doctor standing between them, was aware of strain. He bit his moustache, and considered a moment, looking out. Philip with Max and a stick in the garden caught his eye, and suggested relief by their extremely English aspect. Dealing with foreigners disturbed him.

"Could I speak to Mr. Philip?" he said suddenly.

Madame Lemaure rose from where she had been reposing languidly in a chair, and drew back the curtain which fell across the open door. At the sight of her, Philip and Max approached, and entered together. The boy looked shy and cross; he disliked the publicity of it very much; his plan had been to catch the doctor outside, and his look at that young man spoke his resentment. Dr. Scott knew everything he felt. He became formal in shyness, as Philip became blunt.

"Er—you are in your brother's confidence," he began.

"Yes," said Philip.

"He has had a shock, I'm told. A painful one."

"Yes." No ghost of qualification. The doctor brightened up, for this was business.

"I thought he might have been exciting his brain in addition, but your uncle tells me not."

Philip looked at his uncle swiftly.

"What?" he ejaculated, as if he had not caught the question aright.

"Ah—he has!" Dr. Scott dissimulated his triumph.

"My uncle knows," said Philip awkwardly. "Perhaps he forgot. I mean—he has been writing." His confusion was evident.

"That rubbish?" M. Lucien exclaimed.

"You can kill yourself with rubbish," said Philip between his teeth.

"It has been done," agreed the doctor cheerfully. "I understood M. Lemaure to say he had not been exerting his imagination. You disagree?"

Philip looked straight at him.

"He has been exerting it, to my knowledge, day and night for nearly a week."

"Good," said the doctor. "You say writing. Of what sort?"

"Composition. Music." ("It's done now," thought Philip.)

"What is this?" His grandfather's voice had a new ring in it.

"Ha, here is the very person to inform me." Dr. Scott turned round to him. "I am so ignorant in these matters, sir. You would call that form of—er, invention, a tax on the faculities?"

"It is the greatest tax on the faculties and the nerves that I can conceive," was the instant response. "I am surprised that I have not known." His eyes were on his son. Philip and the doctor turned in the same direction.

"You knew, M. Lemaure?" said the doctor diffidently.

"I knew that he had been writing—something, last night."

"But you could not prevent it?"

"Certainly. I stopped it at once." The doctor nodded satisfaction.

"*Stopped* it, Lucien?" His father caught up the word. "How?"

"I took away what he had written, mon pêre."

"Before he had finished?" ("An excitable family," reflected the doctor. "That's where the boy gets it.")

"I—hardly know. I did not look at the—thing." Contemptuous patience was in his tone.

"It was not finished," said Philip to his grandfather. "He was on the point of finishing the first part."

"Strung up to the point? If I do not know!—sir!" M. Lemaure turned quickly to the doctor. "You need go no further. It was enough to break his heart at once. I only marvel that it did not."

"Good dog," said Dr. Scott under his breath to Max. It occurred to him that it was quite time to begone.

"I'll be off and get something to put the kid to sleep," he said, forgetting formality in his hurry. "I'll look in again later on. Excuse me," and he hastened to retreat.

Max went after him, and then Philip.

"I say," he said coming up with him on the path. "You are a beast. Why couldn't you come out, instead of lugging me in there?"

"Awful stew, wasn't it?" said the young doctor with sympathy. "No other way, though, when it gets to that point. Things have to come out, you know, or we fellows can't get going." He alluded to the medical profession. "If you'd the tips," he added, condescendingly, "you might have told me about Tony before. I don't care to see a kid in that state, more particularly one I like."

"Will it be a long business?" said Philip. The doctor shrugged.

"It's jolly easy to get into a hole from which it's jolly hard to get out," was his way of formulating his newest case. "But I'll do what I can," he added gruffly, as he turned at the gate. "You leave it to me, Edgell, and get back to dinner. And look here"—realising another responsibility—"don't let your aunt worry; that's no good."

"She won't much," said Philip. "Hi, Max."

"But—he tore it up," said Tony to his grandfather when, later in the evening, M. Lemaure laid his composition in his hands. The papers were rolled and bound securely, so that he did not immediately recognise them, especially as his brain was rather slow. He held it puzzled, staring intently at this visitor to his dreams. The visitor had come twice, so that really things began to look as if he might be genuine.

"It is all there," said M. Lemaure with his comforting serenity. "Just as it passed from thy hands I *know* that no one has looked at it since it left this room."

Laying his hand over Tony's trembling fingers, he pushed the confining band off the roll of music. But he did not look down as it fell open, though at the moment it was the one thing in all the world that he most wished to see. After a minute, the boy's eyes, so dangerously dilated, turned to him.

"You did not read it?" he said.

"No," said M. Lemaure. "You see, it is not mine to read."

"His," said Antoine. "He said so, yes—but," he added swiftly, "it is not."

"Why, no, how could it be?" M. Lemaure, weary of standing, sat down at his side.

After another interval of contemplation, Antoine pushed it from him, vaguely in his grandfather's direction.

"I am tired," he said. "It is not finished, and I cannot now; but you will see how I meant."

"Thank you, my dear," said M. Lemaure with feeling; and taking out his glasses, he fixed them on deliberately.

Again Antoine gave him a moment's flitting attention; he must be right, if all his movements corresponded so remarkably with the grandfather he had known, a very long time ago, in that little room above the chestnuts of the Luxembourg.

It seemed absurd though that he should be here, in this other room that he had once loved, that now suggested torment alone to his mind.

M. Lemaure, still keeping his hand over the boy's hot one, gathered up the sheets with the other. Antoine looked out of the window, which Yvonne had opened wide, and noticed with relief that the first little stars, so fine as to need some faith to discover, were looking through the fading sky. When the sky was full again, the strong, painful ideas—necessary to the completion of that music—might come back. He did not want them much—he dreaded them rather—but no doubt they would come. At present his mind was happily blank, with scarcely even the scattered glimmer of the sky he watched.

His grandfather read with concentration meanwhile, for he had not long before the doctor came to grasp the whole, and it was considerably harder than he had expected. He got to the end or rather ran against the barrier of blank paper which annoyed him, and then turned rapidly back to the beginning again, that he might pick up and connect all the threads. Next, wondering privately what the doctor would say to him if he knew, he asked a few questions: for the boys' immature manuscript—very hurriedly written besides—was in places hard to decipher with certainty. Antoine answered him easily and at once, glancing passingly at the paper and then to the sky again. It was plain that, whatever else had grown

confused, every bar was written on his mind up to the point where he had been interrupted.

"C'est ça," the judge said satisfied, and finally dropped the scroll.

"You like it?" said Antoine presently, the new edge to his voice making it sharp and indifferent.

M. Lemaure bowed his head, unable to do more. The audacity almost appalled him, to fling oneself at thirteen on these unknown seas of pain. He knew, looking backward, that his own powers had sprung evenly and easily; he had known physical hardship enough in his youth—but no spiritual tempests until years later than this; yet this little boy, placed in ease and tranquillity such as he had never known, had already anticipated the sorrows of life to this point. The alarm he had felt on first looking on him that afternoon had some foundation now, for the evidence was clear and strong, and couched in the form he most easily recognised. He felt, as he had already often felt before, a correspondence in the instincts of expression between himself and this youngest of his descendants: and by means of that affinity he had been able to follow, and to follow swiftly, not only what he had written, but what he had intended by writing; for the written expression, though astonishing enough, was awkward and childish at a hundred points.

An outburst of Max's barking below the window proclaimed the approach of the doctor. The boy drew back impatiently from the noise, which obviously hurt him. M. Lemaure, seeing the line of pain, rose to his feet.

"I will go down, n'est-ce-pas, and ask your dog from you to be more gentle." He had to wait for an answer, for even his clear words were slow to penetrate.

"Yes, please," said Antoine, without troubling to turn his eyes.

M. Lemaure laid his strong hand on the boy's hot brow, hiding the painful line that made him look so old.

"Have you any other message," he suggested, "before the doctor makes you sleep?"

"Tell him," said Tony after an interval, still absently staring out, "to come up here; because then I shall say that I am sorry."

For one minute the moralist in M. Lemaure exulted. It only needed so much to soothe Lucien's irritable feelings, and then things below would move so much more easily. He smiled down encouragement.

"That is all, my dear?"

"Yes," said Tony, turning wearily away. "That is all he wants. He likes to sleep with me; and—and he does not bark when he is here."

V

MADAME LEMAURE, as usual, proved to be right. Her father-in-law stayed a week, and when, owing to a necessary engagement, he had to return home, he took Antoine with him.

Before he did so, he approached Dr. Scott on the subject with the greatest care and circumspection, for however his son might rail at his ignorance, M. Lemaure believed him to be earnest and sincere, and held him worthy of all consideration in consequence. To his relief, however, he found diplomacy unnecessary, for his first advances were met eagerly half-way. The young doctor opined that the change in itself might do good, and that in any case he would be going to the centre for first-rate medical opinion, should it prove advisable to have recourse to it. He was discreet and modest, but M. Lemaure gathered that he was not content with the boy's condition, saying indeed frankly that there were signs he "did not like." The journey he owned was a difficulty, but with "ordinary luck" it need not hurt him: and as Dr. Scott said, "you are the man to do it, sir."

"Ordinary luck" so-called failed, as it proved. Though the day of the journey began pleasantly, it rapidly turned intensely hot, and before night the thunder that Antoine dreaded came rolling up on all sides. For years afterwards, M. Lemaure remembered that transit from London to Paris, familiar to him as any route could be, as a slowly intensifying nightmare. Some of the history of it he wrote two days later to his son, sparing himself no abuse in the recital.

M. Lucien handed the letter to his wife, with the single comment: "There he is in perfection."

"The child is alive, and that is all that can be said. All our good stars failed us, his and mine: and long before we reached here I cursed myself for cruelty. I believe as a fact, Lucien, I made every mistake it was possible to make. I had better give up, and retire to my chimney-corner.

"At Victoria, a certain lady of London, whom I barely know by name, recognised me for my sins: and demanded

to add me to her suite of maid, companion, dogs, and husband (pardon, I should have put the dogs first, then the order is correct), in a compartment already well-filled by these. I pleaded my charge, but very weakly, for she chose to flatter him, and I thought she had a heart. I forced Antoine to be civil, and he went too far and was piquant; then of course Madame la Duchesse would not be separated, and overcame us both with attentions all the way. It was an ordeal, for he excited himself rapidly in the heat, and I knew not what he might say, though I had to feign amusement.

"On the sea, thanks to Providence and a breeze, we escaped her. She suffered and went below. I kept the child in the wind and the spray, and he recovered his senses, though he was white enough. At Calais we were crowded again, for though I had spoken to the station-master, owing to a mistake at the very last moment we were invaded; English once more and a typical provincial family; boys and girls and infants, hats and parcels, a helpless mother, and an aunt sent purposely by the evil one for Antoine's torment. I must feel an eternal resentment against this lady, for no better reason than that heaven had made her ugly. Her heart I believe was very kind, her intelligence above the ordinary, for she bore the whole burden of the family en route; but her features were unsuitable to anything but a carnival nightmare, and it was too evident that Antoine regarded her as such. She sat directly opposite to him, and I felt his horror growing, though I hardly dared look down to observe it. The thunder came at Amiens, and I nearly alighted there . . . would that I had! All the hour after that, he was in almost intolerable pain. The frightful lady was pitiful and offered him some tea. You may imagine he was rude! I spoke to him sharply, like the fool I was, for I greatly doubt if she followed what he said, and forced him to accept her kindness. But he was too far gone to be helped by such slight stimulus. I gave him brandy, which was a little better, but added to the fever.

"At the Nord I put him into Michel's charge to convey to the car, and then kept them waiting while I aided these ladies, who did not find the friends they expected, and whose mountains of baggage perplexed them. Pfui! why were women ever in the world? So I feel to-day. I am haunted still by

the terrible smile of gratitude which madame la tante afforded me. I trust they reached their hotel and that they will never cross my path again.

" When I got back to the car, the boy was nearly incapable, and I still see Michel's scowl of condemnation. We reached home, at an exceedingly dangerous pace, for Michel regarded nobody in the path. He carried Antoine in himself, without a thought to the automobile, up all the flights and into the study ; and then came down, still scowling, to assist me.

" Is that suffiient, my son, as confession of a day's misdeeds ? By no means. This affair at the Institut claimed me and almost immediately I abandoned him again. I believed I was doing right, and though Raymond Savigny has abused me without stint, I still incline to believe so. Antoine implored me to stay with him, haunted evidently by that goblin in the train. I reasoned with him, informed him that he was foolish, that the vision was unreal, and such trash at weary length ; spoke of the claims of the Institut, of the needs of the Blind, his great eyes searching me for pity all the time. Raymond tells me to join the ranks of the blind myself, since I am so devoted to them, and it is so evident my eyes are of no use. Oh, he was furious when he came to-day ! By a stroke of fortune, I met him at the soirée, and made him promise to come and see the boy.

" ' Encore la famille,' he said and I could see he thought me a fool for my insistence ; yet he still has regard to whatever pertains to Henriette, and fortunately I used that persuasion.

" He came in a crabbed humour, expecting to have to dose a spoiled child. Well—I had my revenge. I never saw him so rapidly interested in anything. I presume Antoine fitted into some department of his researches which demanded a specimen as demonstration. He got him in his arms, under the spell of his eyes, and learnt everything : the night he had spent with that cruel vision I had mocked—the pain, the horror of it : how he had angered me by refusing to go out in the morning, for fear that he should meet it ' dancing in the street ' (his words), his horror of sleeping—a thing I had never come near to realise—because of these dreams ; all his long misery laid out till I could have wept. I besought Savigny to stop him at last, for his will was doing it easy to be seen. He just

smiled and said 'enough'; and Antoine dropped his head back with the words struck off his tongue. Finally he sent him to sleep with the most inspiring facility. I never saw, even with him, the power pass more easily; it was done almost by a look, and the little one was sleeping in his arms.

"Then came my turn. Raymond examined me calmly, as I never wish to be examined again, speaking aloud without fear across the boy. Of course we are too late: with these great artists that is invariable. He should have had him a fortnight, three weeks, a month ago—as if in this ignorant world such things are possible! Now he has him, he will not let him go. Hard though it is, I foresee I shall have to part with him, to hand him over to the 'atelier Savigny' in the Boulevard. At his behest I have telegraphed to Jem. Without that permission I should not wish indeed to take the responsibility, greatly though I trust him professionally and love him in person. He desires naturally to prove his theories; and to have such a good subject for them as a boy of this age is not a chance to be thrown away. I feel for him, though I could slay him for the arrogant suggestion. How can he—how dare he—know better than I?" ("Will he never grow old?" his son murmured reading.) "While he was under that trance, he examined him completely, and he declares beyond these things there is nothing wrong at all—that he is both sound and well-developed physically. For this, I am surprised to say, he thanks the English school. For an overweighted brain, he says he can conceive no better life; for the body is well fed, and the brain is not. . . . Keep this from Philippe for your life! He wants even passionately to assume possession, I can see; and I would stake my whole experience, confirmed theorist though he is, that he will run risks with a baby of Henriette's. I dare not say this to James—especially by cable!—but if he refuses, as seems probable, I will see what some persuasion on paper will do."

Two days later:

"A single word from Antoine's father—of consent. Magnificent, is he not? At that distance—but I always admired his courage. So soon as I have delivered up my charge, I start on a pilgrimage at Savigny's instigation. I have given

him no hint of it, but some thought has passed to him, as thoughts do, betraying that I am unable to wait here in my house—alone."

That was all that Lucien could be told. But as that year grew old, age descended swiftly also on M. Lemaure.

The late March sun was gilding the greenest corner of the gardens of the Luxembourg, glittering thinly and gaily on men and things as it only deigns to do in Paris. Under the budding peach-trees, each the central object of a dainty little picture, the new grass was springing, sparsely as yet, but with evident determination sooner or later to produce the good effect of an English lawn. From the low, black branches of the lime-trees fat pigeons dropped mutely among the children who fed them, and the chattering sparrows darted among them disputing the spoil. Behind the railings trim espaliers were already promising the hoary white of pear-blossom ; and the bloused and belted youth of France were permitted for the first time by their watchful parents to kick their footballs under the feet of loiterers in the avenue where the vista is closed by a vision of the Panthéon dome.

Innumerable visitors were passing and repassing over the walks, visitors of many nations, classes, and ages : from the long-haired, loose-lipped student whose native haunt it was, to a brown ayah guarding pretty pale babies, and a lank English girl settling feverishly to the business of a holiday. Generally speaking, the glances that passed conveyed good-humoured tolerance ; very rarely this verged on curiosity or mockery, for Paris is a good hostess and courteous to her guests. Most rarely of all a glance became a stare, but a temptation to such staring may have been observed in those who passed a certain seat. It was occupied by a single lady, badly dressed in black, who seemed, although English in every line of her awkward figure, singularly indifferent to observation, for she neither shrank, feigned occupation, nor even looked aside from the casual starer, but glanced back again with a certain vigorous interest in the persons and the scene about her, as though for the moment her whole object was to lose herself and take it in. Only once she was seen to move from her seat : when a small boy, solemnly guiding

an immense air-balloon on a string, with his black eyes raised and fixed on its glorious form against the light spring sky, tripped over a wire palisade and fell prone on the grass. With a howl of despair he let go his string, and the balloon, in a frisky wind, went wandering in the lady's direction. She caught it neatly with one bare hand and, rising from her place, set the small boy on his legs. Then, while he vaguely rubbed his velvet-shorn head in doubt whether to cry, she returned the string to him with an encouraging nod. That, and the pleasant smile accompanying it, restored the young Frenchman to philiosophy.

"It appears," said he, staring vaguely about him and rubbing still, "that one has lost one's equilibrium." The lady, nodding again, laughed aloud on a very pleasant note and returned to her former seat.

She had quite lost herself in meditation when approaching voices aroused her. Two old men, French evidently, both interesting in face, though singularly unlike, approached along the path from the Observatory avenue. They stopped in the shade, and glanced at the lady. She was abstracted evidently, and patently a foreigner.

"See, is there anything to equal it?" said one. "Here is a place where it is a sin to be old. If one could rest a moment, Savigny."

The other and more vigorous of the two looked at his watch, and while he did so the English lady flung him a glance. The name was unusual, and happened to be known to her. She had already said to herself privately, "a crank": and he fitted the title every inch. He was taller than his companion, loose-limbed and shambling, with the rounded shoulders of the student, and the queerest eyes she had ever seen in a human face. Cold and cutting eyes, though the shape and setting of them were benevolent.

"There is no such thing," said the first speaker, who had dropped himself into a seat, "as time. Go, Raymond, if thou hast to go. Here is my limit." He leaned back, seemingly weary.

"Good," said the other with a jerk. "I go."

"See him chew the bit," his friend mocked mildly.

"Why not wait an instant, and permit yourself a thought under a tree. 'A green thought in a green shade.'"

The lady lifted her eyebrows, for the English words were beautifully spoken.

"Bah, I have no leisure for green thoughts. Mine are dust-coloured with the road."

"Eh? Why do you linger then?" His friend watched him. "You know, you have given me nothing at all to-day. Must I then go home unfed."

"You lose faith, hein?" The steely eyes fixed him suddenly.

"I think not: only patience. I never did cultivate patience, Raymond."

"Drop it then: a worthless thing. All I ever had is hardened, changed in form and in name."

"Ah? What do you call it now?"

"Indifference. I am cold."

He stood upright as a dart, looking over his companion's head. He looked indeed as cold as a northern iceberg, as hard, and as sharp-edged, too.

"You"—he dropped his eyes—"will never be indifferent. You are hot to the surface, after all these years that I have known you. Be thankful, Lemaure, that your trade is not mine."

The lady on the seat moved again. Evidently she had fallen into distinguished company in this unpretentious garden of the people.

"I am thankful," said the older man slowly, "that your trade is yours." Then his voice changed. "Raymond, have pity," he said. "May I see him soon?"

The other one paused, and scanned the grass, smiling slightly with his cold eyes intent.

"It is himself you would see, eh? Not the toy with which I play."

"Do not torment me," said the other. "You are not what you represent yourself to be, and never have been."

"Eh? What do I represent myself to be?"

"What nobody is. The dissecter without heart; the human experimentalist who is inhuman. It is not possible."

There was a pause.

"It would entertain me to the world's end," said the tall man, "to experiment on *you*. You are the most interesting man in the world, for you have but one self. Good heavens!

does one have one hat ? Have another, Lemaure. It is too good for common use. See only now, this moment, how you wear it, waste it—and for what ?' '

" For what ? Raymond,y ou have no children. My other self is in your hands. Do you not know it ? "

The lady in black was sitting very still—heedfully so, it seemed. If she understood them, it seemed impossible that she should remain sitting there ; for the last words were trembling with the passion one does not choose to overhear.

There was perfect silence, except for the birds, in the sunlit garden.

" What are children ? " said the tall man in a harsh voice, letting his eyes stray to the sunny paths, where many children played. " Why should I care for them ? Take your sentiment, your poetry away—they are but unfinished facts. It is the fulfilled fact that I seek and must continue seeking, the perfect man."

" Seek him," said the other quickly. " Leave us the children. What are they, indeed ? Possibilities, renewals, promises—banality you say no doubt, but truth. Banality is always that. The only perfect thing in this imperfect world is promise, Savigny. All this year, this garden will never be such again as we see it now."

" Ah, what a theory of desperation," the other said, crushing the edge of the young grass with his foot.

" Yes, I am desperate," said the first speaker quite gently. " I confess it has come to that."

Savigny maltreated the grass for a minute longer.

" Well "—he paused to sigh sharply—" no other man than you should tempt me to betray ; and I shall regret it for certain before the hour is out. Your promise is safe, my friend. I only guard it in the dark a little still, because the light is so much to bear, though the night is over."

" And you say you are no poet," said the other, after a stillness. " Raymond, you are the poet of life ! Leave the others to their words." His voice was trembling greatly.

" I did not promise, hey ? " said the cranky man, still harshly. " But see—I fulfil."

" *May* I see ? "

"Perhaps, soon. I will not be hurried, mind you." He gave one of his impatient jerks. "I let you come, and what follows? I have remade him faithfully—and you take him from me." He threw his long limbs suddenly into a chair beside his friend.

"Why not?" smiled M. Lemaure. "You do not care for children."

"*That* is not a child. Good heavens! It is a spirit—adorably complete. You parents—you triflers," Savigny cried, shaking the chair he grasped, for he was planted sideways in it. "Saying you know them when you know the colour of their eyes and hair—or perchance the shape of their nails! I know the colour of his spirit, Lemaure. I have had it like a bird to look at all the winter. It had no master, for I took his will from him, that he might rest. How many of us could trust our masterless spirit, my friend?—how many? How many even have a spirit at all to trust?"

Both men were silent again. The lady, doubtless proving her theory that this was a crank indeed, sat silent too. She might have been asleep for all the movement she made, or one of the dark bronze figures of the garden.

"But now I give him back his will," said Savigny gently, poking at the grass with his stick, "and he begins to hate me."

"Never! Do not say it."

"It must be so. That is my fate. Sometimes I doubt if the gods like us to trifle with these great things; for the penalty they send is heavy. That is why I have made my armour of indifference."

"But he will love you, Raymond. He must."

"No. Ask yourself, how can he? I have been the one thing in his dark world to fear. I have gathered all his terrors into myself, of deliberate purpose. I have imprisoned him, tormented him, crushed him back, stood black in his path when he tried to see the truth. I am Anti-truth to him, Lemaure: the Arch-deceiver. He cannot love me. He should not."

"You hid the truth when he could not bear it," said the old man quickly. "Now he will see it again, and you in the light of Truth."

Savigny smiled, a slow smile, and rose to his feet.

"There," he said, looking down with his icy eyes, "are some very pretty fables. You surmise, my poet: but I have known. How many have I cured, with no love to show for it? Money—a trifle of fame perhaps—much abuse—that tasteless substance gratitude—but no love." He paused and smiled again. "Antoine is great, perhaps," he said, "but not so great as that."

And pulling his loose frame together with a jerk, he moved forward. "Come on Sunday at five," he said suddenly across his shoulder. "And be sure you cultivate indifference—for I will not have him frightened."

After a short interval his friend rose too, and limped into the open. For the first time he faced the lady, and noticed that she was crying. Her tears, her mourning dress, and her strong face, appealed to him in combination: and he feared she had been distressed by their ignortant intrusion on her solitude. Hanging doubtful a second, he uncovered and said a gentle "Pardon," before he passed on his way.

The very same evening, M. Lemaure received a letter, left, it appeared, by a messenger with the concierge. It was in a remarkable hand and in English.

"DEAR SIR" (it ran) —

"First I make a confession. I heard the whole of your conversation in the garden this morning with Raymond Savigny. His is a name I know well, for my husband in his life-time was one of his earliest and warmest admirers in our unscientific country. That was one thing that interested and held me—the other was the boy you spoke of. There was no divination. I knew my Tony's guardians were Lemaures in England, and you yourself are as like him as youth and age can ever be. I could not have missed the likeness when you paused before me that moment, and I nearly spoke. But I had no courage: and my contribution to the knowledge of the world shall be on paper, as henceforth it will always be. I have strangely lost the power to converse since I lost the boy who always talked with me; and I have resumed in a measure the power to write, which I laid aside at the time of my marriage.

"Enough of myself: I write of Tony.

"I treated him badly, and knew that I did so. My boy accused him of betraying a secret, all-important to him, which resulted in his leaving school; which resulted in hardship, which gave its chance to the disease that watched him always. I never believed Tony's action was deliberate; though Douglas in his anger declared he wished his brother to win the prize, and so betrayed him to the boys who destroyed his paper. Tony could not have laid a plot of the elaborate sort he chose to credit, my heart and reason told me. His actions spring too directly from the moment, he is too natural, too 'objective' as they say—and too young. Douglas never allowed for his youth, though he was always complaining of it: and feeling greatly injured, he clung to his theory. He even shook me a little by declaring that Tony had been alone with his so-called enemies during a walk the day before the paper disappeared: and that being charged with the betrayal, he had not denied it. Still, I never thought he had been more than reckless, as he always was, and perhaps faithless a little. I let myself think of him lightly—it was easy in my distraction—till the time when Philip's letter came, a brave letter and a good one, begging me to help Tony *for his reason's sake.*

"And by then, sir, I was indifferent. What your friend said to-day of indifference touched me very nearly. My long patience 'hardened' too, like his. I could think of nothing but self-pity in my loneliness.

"But, you will say, he was lonely too. So he was, for genius is always lonely. But I did not think of that then. I told myself he had friends about him, that life was full for him, that a poor remnant like myself could matter to no one, least of all a bright young thing like that. But beneath the surface I knew I was a traitor all the time: and that he needed me, as he had shown me once before. I was a coward simply in choosing oblivion; and now that my oblivion is invaded by knowledge of the danger he has passed through, I am repaid. It was the truth I was afraid of, not Tony. I am still afraid of the truth I should find in his eyes, of which yours this morning reminded me. I cannot approach him now. With Savigny's help, he has started on a new stage of life. The past is past, and he had better forget.

"I give no address and no date, for I am going on, and this is to be destroyed. If ever you find the picture of his little soul in a book, you will know I painted it. But he will be great before I am.

"ELIZABETH D. ARCHERSON."

It was in this way that his grandfather could meet Antoine the Sunday following, knowing the last of the truth.

The same Sunday evening, Savigny gave him leave to wire once more a few words to Jem; and the next day he wrote himself the last of his careful series to the man who had formerly been his rival, and enclosed another short slip within it.

"DEAR PAPA,—

"I shall not write much to you because Savigny says so, and because my English has now got difficult again. That is rather a pity when you said I was getting decent.

"I am sorry" (underlined) "that I was bad to get ill. It did not need that he should tell me I was bad and stupid, because I knew that. Only I had to tell him *all* what I thought, and so I made him angry.

"That is finished now, and since a lot of weeks I want to be well, so I believe he has forgotten the other part. Only very sometimes his eyes are dreadfull (that is to spell like bread I think) like for example because I was a fool to cry when Grandpapa went away. He said, I should not be a fool and I should tell him what I realy wished. So I said I wished to go back to live there, soon before my birthday. And he said yes I shall go. After that I was *realy awfuly* polite, because he was so decent. Yes and imagine to know just in looking when one is not polite inside. That is horrid for a man and enough to have blue spectacles all the time.

"I am very happy to-night when I write to you, so that you see how each line becomes more mad and curious. I think this last one shall go round the paper, and you who so like straight lines!"

After a particularly splendid signature he scrawled: "I wish you would come now on one very straight line home."

VI

ALL the house-boys had arrived and were shut comfortably in their various rooms when there was a knock at Mr. Alexander's door.

"Ah. How are you, Edgell? Caught the last train, that's right. Alone?" The headmaster glanced behind him as Philip shut the door.

"I'm sorry, sir. I thought you wanted to see *me*." A gentle accent was marked. Mr. Alexander laughed.

"So I do. I was only afraid you had arrived without him after all. Your brother has come?"

"Oh yes. I've got him."

"You waited at the junction?" Philip nodded.

"How long?"

"Some time." Then at the inviting look,—"three hours."

"My dear boy! Was there no other train?"

"None, from our wretched place."

"He came through from Paris, eh? Might you not almost better have waited here?"

"No, sir, I think not." Edgell coloured. "It's a matter of taste."

"So it is. You had not seen him at all since——"

"Not since." Mr. Alexander understood perfectly.

"He looks better, I hope?"

"Oh yes, they all say he's well, so I suppose he is."

"Changed? Bound to be, of course." Alexander was piercing Philip's beautifully impassive look. "You've had a good holiday, I hope; you needed it."

"I'm all right, sir." He fiddled with the papers on the cloth.

"Not reading too much?"

"I've been with Drake at Oxford." Edgell smiled faintly.

"That's why you look so stale then. You young donkeys! With the open weather we've been having too."

"Easter's so short: not worth doing more with."

"Rubbish. A few hours will give you golf. Good news of your father, Edgell?"

"Yes, sir. He'll get home in July."

"Really? His line is finished, then? I congratulate you."

"Thanks. I think this time he'll really come. He says he must," Philip added suddenly, "if it's only to shake hands with Savigny."

"Yes, indeed. How anxious he must have been. He had confidence though?"

"He said he could trust him like one of the immortals."

"Yes, yes." Mr. Alexander rose. "Savigny deals with things that mortals cannot tackle—things that are more than life and death."

"That's what he means," said Philip.

"I am thankful," said the headmaster, "for you all." He took Philip's hand. "As far as I can make out the pluck's been level all round—yours, and his, and M. Lemaure's. As for the boy——"

"Wait till you see him, sir," said Philip, drawing his hand back and himself. "There's been some pluck wanted. Shall I send him?"

"He's had a long journey, isn't he tired? Perhaps to-morrow——"

Philip hesitated; then half smiled.

"I think, if you don't send for him, he—he'll come."

Mr. Alexander also smiled grimly, and drew his papers about him on all sides.

"Tell him I am exceedingly busy, but I have a minute—during which I expect him to report himself. That will do, I think."

"Yes, sir," said Edgell, "if you keep him to the minute."

"Ah. They've not stopped his tongue?"

"Not all the doctors in the world——" and Philip vanished.

He did what boys naturally did in that solemn presence, slipped in and out. Antoine, entering five minutes after, took possession of the room. He also came to the headmaster as one certain of a welcome; and it would have needed a stiffer pedagogue than Alexander not to give it.

"Very well, thank you," said Antoine. "Oh, I forgot to shut the door." He remedied this omission as though he had come to stay, and then looked all round the study. "It is

funny to be here," he said. "Things are so the same in schools."

"Why," Alexander remarked, "you have forgotten your English."

"Yes, I have. I have not been in England since—since" (he ran his fingers on the table) "seven months. Seven!"

"Does it seem less?"

"No—more. Not months, not years: just—" he signified a gulf. "You are very busy." He approached the table.

"Didn't your brother tell you so?"

"Philippe? Yes, he told me. But you wished to see me?"

A look accompanied this under which the headmaster's dignity tottered. "Of course I did. I have a letter to thank you for." He put his hand on a certain box.

"It came?—they told me I was not to write. They did not know. I wonder, could you understand? You see, to write—to say what is true—when one is ill——"

"I know. I understood. I wished you had not tormented yourself."

"But you wrote to me."

"I was wrong to ask the question. If I had known, I would not have worried you, Tony. I thought you had a secret, and needed help to say it. I saw you were wretched, that last term." He drew him closer. Antoine lifted his black eyes straight to him, and Alexander saw at once the months of suffering through which he had passed. Philip was right enough as to that. "There was nothing to tell," Alexander interpreted. The boy shook his head mutely. "That was the worst of it, eh? It just *was*, like all the aching facts of life."

"Aching—oh, yes." He caught at the word. "It was silly to be ill, wasn't it?" he said timidly. "Because of course there are lots of things like that." It was half a question, and he waited. "Fancy to be ill every time somebody died! And to die yourself is to be just a coward." He seemed to recite a lesson, to which Alexander lent the closest attention. "I never knew how it was easy to die," Antoine pursued in a conversational tone. "But that is for a coward, because it is easy. Do you know M. Savigny?"

"Not personally. Did he tell you that?"

"Yes. He knows about it."

"He scolded you, did he?"

"He was very angry, often." The boy paused frowning.

"It must have been worse than school," Alexander suggested, leaning his head on his hand. Antoine laughed sharply.

"Oh, not the same at all. You were never angry like that. School!"

Alexander realised a little more through the laugh.

"A big illness," he said, "is the severest school there is. But they have given you holidays since, Tony, haven't they? It was not school to the end of the time."

"No. Only while I was with him. Grandpapa is different, of course."

"You stayed on in Paris?"

"He has to, you see. But since just three weeks, we have been to Savoie. That was beautiful."

The last—Antoine's own word—relieved the strain. Alexander felt a certain delight to hear it in his accents again: it seemed to recall the boy of a year ago—for this was not he.

"I am glad you had something beautiful to finish. Had you music too?"

"A little, yes. It has come back." His brow knit up, and to Alexander's surprise, his colour rose. "I must not—do too much," he said.

"Was I to be told that?"

"Yes." Then he broke out. "But it is no use telling! If I do too much, you will not know."

"No one will know, but yourself."

"No one but myself." His mouth set, and he threw up his head. "Still, I have told you."

"Whose law is it?"

"His!"—with scorn.

"Savigny's? Shall you break it, then?"

"Shall I?" The boy shrugged. "I have wasted so much time. Do you know, a month ago, still I couldn't play. I wouldn't listen either. I thought it was dead."

"Were you unhappy?"

"Unhappy? I don't know. I was dead. I hated Savigny because he had made me dead for it."

"That was unreasonable, rather."

"I thought he was doing it on purpose. He can, you know."

"Can what?"

"Change you. Make you hate what you like: anything. He can make you do *anything*."

"I see. So he made you waste your time, you think. Why? In order to get well?"

"I don't know." Antoine looked cross.

"I daresay he thinks you are apt to be in a hurry. Doctors, you see, know the value of time."

"But wasted time."

"Yes, of wasted time above all."

"You are like my grandfather sometimes," said Antoine, after a pause. He came nearer. "I will try."

"Try to be good?" Alexander smiled. "Why, yes; you must try, because you are a man again. You are trusted, Tony."

"How trusted?"

"With yourself. By yourself, you would have died, or worse." The boy's eyes darkened, and the man hurried on. "All that learning and that love that set you on your feet again must be repaid. You must bear yourself—manfully. You are trusted."

"How do you know?"

"Simply by the fact that you are sent back here."

The boy bit his lip. "I didn't want to come. I was frightened."

Alexander bowed his head. This at any rate was foreseen.

"Are you frightened now you have come?"

"No. N-not very much. If I had come alone, perhaps."

"Ah. Your brother thought of that."

"He waited at Gracebridge. I—I thought he would have gone on. There were three trains: but he waited."

"Did it surprise you?"

"I had not thought of it." Antoine paused reflecting. "But of course he was very good before too. I mean in the holidays before I went to Paris."

"He only went on being the same after the interval." Alexander grew amused, as usual with Tony. He had never gathered his thoughts on his brother before.

"Yes, that's all. But I had forgotten."

"Forgotten Philip?"

"Yes, it was curious. I had not thought of him at all. That is to say, I just thought at Euston, he will be with Glenmuir, he will go on with him. But till I saw him, I did not really remember."

Antoine presented these curious facts for the headmaster's judgment.

"You were glad to see him and remember, weren't you?"

"Of course I was glad to see him. The people in the train were very ugly."

Alexander laughed out: and after a second, Tony smiled too.

"You think that funny, that I mind about beautiful things," he observed.

"Not at all, really. Nor that you count your brother among them. It is exactly like you, Tony; and if I had not forgotten *you*, I should not laugh, I beg your pardon. We have had no one here at all like you since you left."

"Haven't you?" Tony smiled his brilliant smile, and then instantly sighed. "Shall I be a bother for you? Grandpapa thought I would be."

"Not more than you used," said Mr. Alexander, with small regard to truth.

"Perhaps I shall not be so bad," said Antoine thoughtfully. "Very likely I shall not be."

"Suppose," said Mr. Alexander, "you worked." Then, as Antoine looked politely interested, "Lessons, I mean—schoolwork. Mr. Johnstone says your mathematics are very good when you like."

"Yes, it is interesting," Antoine assented agreeably.

"Well, why not push forward a bit, and have something to show by the time your father comes home?"

Antoine took in the idea and weighed it; though it was clear he had to throw off a big weight of indifference to do so.

"Will you think it over?" Mr. Alexander felt an absurd shyness of pressing him. He could not but himself feel the banality of lessons in the boy's presence. He was aware he had made a slight impression, and dreaded to say a word too

much, and spoil it. So he simply held out his hand, to soften with a warm pressure his final dose of truth.

"I have often thought, for a clever youngster, you are remarkably stupid in class. I expect it is simply because you think of other things."

"I expect so," said Antoine. "I am sorry."

"It is not a question of manners," Alexander hastened to point out, "but a more serious thing. Of course lack of attention is lack of manners, but—" He paused, seeking an idea. "Well, suppose you thought of algebra all the time you were practising." Antoine laughed slightly. "What I mean is, neither thing really *gets done*. And what we live for is to get things done."

"Grandpapa," Antoine remarked, "has said that it is no good practising to get it done."

"Confound it," Alexander thought. "He's caught me." He sat however looking magisterially solemn, a thing he could do excellently. Antoine thought him a very interesting person, and his earnest gaze said as much.

"Thank you," he said and sighed. "Good-night."

Surely the headmaster's hand-clasp might be taken as a dismissal, even if he continued to hold the hand.

"Among your advantages, Antoine," said that surprising person suddenly, "is the artist's point of view. You remind me of that yourself. Look here: I recommend algebra to your attention. It is an—ah—beautiful thing."

He gave Antoine's word its proper accent: but the owner never noticed. "Sometimes it is," he agreed. "I remember it is sometimes. I shall think about it to-night."

"Don't," Alexander ejaculated. "Go to sleep to-night. You can think about it to-morrow instead"—and he just saved himself from adding—"during my Scripture class."

He did add it, with hopeless laughter, when Antoine had left the room. But he went to bed himself feeling younger than he had done for some six months past.

V. JAMES

I

JEM fooled deliberately with Tony on the verandah, till Philip was surprised at him.

Philip wanted to have some serious conversation after dinner, and had laid himself full length in a chair for that purpose. Also it was verging dangerously on the hour of Antoine's lesson in the study, to which he had been virtuously proceeding when his father captured him. The crackle of M. Lucien's newspaper through the open window showed that he was there and waiting: yet Jem pursued his trifling quite regardless.

Antoine himself was desirous to extract the meaning of certain words which had interested him in his father's vocabulary. But he made his investigations under difficulties, for he could get no serious assistance at all.

"You are *silly*, papa," he said at last, dropping back exhausted, the tears of unwilling laughter on his eyelashes.

"Oh well," Jem drawled. "I can't be as cultured as some people."

"I'm not," said Tony rousing. "What is cultured?"

Jem considered. "Ever seen a French poodle," he asked, "combed out and frizzled up, and a bow tied at the side? That's the idea."

"But half the poodle is all bare," Tony objected.

"Well," said Jem with emphasis. "More than half of you is bare blank ignorance, my kid. Only you're frizzled up in front."

"I'm *not* frizzled!" cried Tony outraged.

"Got him!" said Jem serenely. They looked at one another.

"You are old, papa," Antoine observed. "Nearly quite as old as grandpapa when one comes very close."

"I can give him fifteen years," said Jem hastily, "if you want to know."

"Got him!" returned Tony, with nsolence.

They ragged a little. M. Lemaure in the library cleared his throat, and Antoine started.

"Oh, I must go," he said.

"What happens after this lesson?" said Jem.

"I go to bed."

"Then this is good-night, hey?"

"Yes. Oh, papa!" Tony caught him by the neck and made a private request.

"Can't be bothered," said Jem. "Well, we'll see."

"See?" Tony pondered the remembered formula. "Then I do *not* say good-night?"

"You'd better."

"But if I do, you don't come!"

"If you don't," said Jem, "I may go on seeing all night. I want to talk to Phil. Besides, folks as old as me don't care to be hustled."

Tony gazed anxiously at him: he certainly was a first-class subject for teasing.

"You are very tired, papa?"

"Well—I've travelled three thousand miles quite lately."

"Would—to-morrow be better?"

"Hum." Jem's calculating eye was considering how much he could stand. "Whatever the business is, it can wait, I suppose. It's had to wait a month longer as it is, eh?" Tony nodded. "Then what's another day?"

The boy had no answer, and looked aside.

"Warm evening, ain't it, Phil?" said Jem.

"Getting warmer, my way," said Philip. His uncle's paper had rattled again. "Shouldn't wonder if we had a little thunder locally."

Tony drew a long breath, almost a sigh, and picking up his open exercise-book from the table, cast his eyes over it.

Jem reached a long arm, and twitched it out of his hands.

"Oh, look here," he said, studying it. "This'll never do."

"What?" said Antoine.

"Here." Jem tapped a point on the page with gravity. "That's what I call real lazy work. You haven't given your mind to it, my boy."

Tony stared, his brow wrinkling up. Some of the lines were quite deeply marked, his father noticed.

"It's—all right, I think," he said doubtfully.

Jem shook his head. "Ah well, I leave it to your uncle.

I think you'll find he agrees with me. By Jove!" He seemed really pained by his discovery.

Tony looked up at him. "I didn't know you—tell me what it is, papa."

"I couldn't *begin* to tell you, my dear. Besides, there's no time to alter it now. You're late as it is." Jem looked at his watch.

"What time is it?"

"Eight thirty-five."

"Oh!" Tony bit his lip, caught the paper and disappeared.

"Shame, papa," Philip murmured. "He's scared to death of my uncle."

"Well," said James, stretching himself with the lazy grin of a schoolboy, "I've made him jolly late, anyway. Shut up and listen."

There was a thrilling silence in the library as the door opened.

"I understand," said the voice of M. Lemaure, "that you have a prize nom your school for mathematics."

A sound of faint assent.

"Your bedtime is, I think——"

"Nine," said Antoine.

"And this lesson we reckon——"

"F-forty minutes."

"The *un*mathematical person," said M. Lemaure, folding his newspaper up audibly, "would therefore conclude that it commenced at——"

"Eight thirty-five," said Antoine.

Philip gripped his father's arm.

"I should ask you," said M. Lemaure, chucking his paper aside, "*now*, to drop frivolity."

"But," explained Antoine, "I thought you meant I was the unmathematical person, and here is when I have come."

"Hold your tongue," said M. Lemaure. "How much of the lesson, I ask, is already gone, thanks to your taste for chattering?"

"F-fifteen-fortieths," said Antoine. "That is a quarter-and-a-half."

"Hey?" snapped M. Lucien.

"Wonderfully correct," murmured Jem, with his eyes shut, "for an unmathematical person."

" He's a treat, ain't he ? " said Philip absently. " Dad, we can't talk here with them jawing. Come along to my room. You haven't seen it."

" Give us a minute more," said Jem. " Hope he gets his ears boxed."

" I'm afraid," said Tony, his voice unsteady, " it is very bad."

M. Lucien slapped the book audibly on the table.

" What is the use of bringing in work, then, if you can't give your attention to it for twenty minutes in the day ? "

" I did try," said Antoine. " That—that was before papa had arrived."

" Sit there," said M. Lucien grimly. " You know what you have to do."

During the ensuing studious silence, Jem and his son rose and passed round the house.

" He's no right to brainwork as late as this," the engineer remarked. " Guess I'll put a stop to it."

Philip's eyebrows ran up. His penetration had discovered a strain somewhere, even on the first day of general good-humour ; or rather, the opportunity of strain. It was as though the two had each a hand on Antoine, but had as yet forborne to pull. Philip looked forward vaguely to some fun in the next few days.

" Do you reckon he looks well ? " said Jem.

" Tony ? Oh yes, for him. He's a bit excited to-day —no wonder." He ran his arm through his father's. " Did you say you had a plan for to-morrow, sir ? Uncle Ted's was it ? "

" I sort of said I'd take you both over to Wainfield."

" I say," said Philip. " That won't do. He's playing at the club in the town to-morrow. Didn't my uncle mention there was a concert ? "

" Yes. But they don't require him."

Philip laughed slyly. " Don't they. There's been no end of a fuss. Somebody failed, and now my uncle has stuck him in to fill up. He'll have to go."

" What—rot," said Jem with gentle expression. " Then I'll have to put up with you, eh ? Unless I make a haul for him." He considered the question, smoking.

"I shouldn't advise you to really," said Philip.,

"Now did I ask you to advise me?" said Jem. He snubbed Philip at intervals with great deliberation. Philip was half offended, half thrilled by the feeling of old days it gave him. Did his father actually not realise how enormously he had changed for the better since he was a kid?

In silent dignity he led the way to his room; James nosed about it with great interest.

"Jolly lot of books," he murmured, stopping before the shelf now overburdened by a splendid array of prizes. He took out one or two, simply to see what the gorgeous binding contained within. "Haven't read a book for years, barring shop. Is it the form to read nowadays?"

"At school, do you mean? Alexander's made it the form."

"Trench made us read," said Edgell. "Only I wasted a lot of time. How is the old place, Phil?" He stood in front of the Radfield photographs which decorated Philip's mantelpiece.

"Striking out now, sir. They say it hasn't been in such good condition for years. Hope it won't drop."

"When you leave, eh?" His father glanced round. "Don't apologise. I remember just that feeling. And where's the harm, if one's worked for a place?"

Hs swung about and faced the boy.

"You've worked more than a little, haven't you? Tried to lug it up?"

"I've tried not to lug it down," said Philip colouring. Edgell nodded.

"Yes: you and I like having our fingers in the pie, specially if the pie's a good 'un. Does the young one like it?"

"Don't know," said Philip, after a marked pause. "It likes him."

"Notices him, eh?"

"I've had to keep an eye on some of the fellows. He's amusing, you know, and he's not like the ruck of fags."

"Not much," said Jem with a laugh. "So they trot him out and play with him."

"That sort of thing."

"And you have to interfere?"

"I don't approve of the principle," said Philip, frowning.

"I've seen lots of kids spoilt by it. It's more for that than for any harm it does him."

"I see. But for all that, you're not sure if he's happy."

"He *was* happy enough. I expect he'll shake down again. It was that long break, you see. He's been queer, this last term."

"Ah."

"I'm awfully glad you've come, sir. I meant to jaw him before he goes back, but somehow I can't. I could talk to any other kid better. Besides it's the point of view; and if a year and a half at Radfield can't knock that into him, I don't know what can. If he looked at things the least like other people, I should know where to start. But—and he's been getting worse."

The boy's brow clouded, and he bent his head. His father surveyed him with keen interest. He had caught the other side of Philip, and it relieved him; he might have remembered there was another side for boys of his stamp.

"You've been bothered—vexed in mind?"

"That's more like it," said Philip. "I wouldn't fag, only there seems no one else to do it. I told you about the other fellows. Well, the masters, Alexander himself—it's all the same. If you heard the way he talks to them, as if they were friends he had picked up by chance. And they just laugh, and let him. As for the rules—he doesn't care a hang, I do believe. He's got out of bad scrapes a thousand times by the skin of his teeth—or because some one didn't do their duty—and I don't believe he even knows it! It's—distracting. It isn't as if he was a fool, either. He's worked in this one term to the top of his form. Alexander says he likes to talk to him. It's—the point of view."

"Hum," said the father. "Sounds as if he wants a licking."

"If that was all—" began Philip: and then looked round, caught his father's eye, and laughed.

"You're as bad as any one, Phil. You don't take him seriously."

"I do, sir. I may laugh sometimes, but I'm precious serious."

"I know you are." Edgell put his hand on his shoulder. "I'll give him a talking to to-night. Will that do?"

"I wish you would. He'd mind you more than me."

"I've been suspecting from his letters that he's not properly aware of the honour of being a Radfield boy."

"That's it," said Philip.

"And there's another argument you can't use. He's been undoing your work: making you feel a fool—a bit of a humbug. Isn't that it?"

"Something like it," said Philip under his breath. What a glorious thing a father was, to be sure.

"That'll get him," said Jem, "for he's fond of you. Then, at Philip's look—"Oh, isn't he. You should see his letters. There's never much doubt about Tony's enthusiasms. You've helped him at every turn, and I know how brutally difficult that is to do at school. If he's not grateful, he ought to be. I'll screw it in."

When M. Lemaure came into the garden soon after nine, James was admiring the new wing.

"Lord, what a room," he said. "Fairless built that for you, I bet."

"He did—and Storm built the organ."

"Humph," said Jem. "Looks as if your trade pays. If you'd stuck to the public life, now, would it have paid so well? I guess not."

"One can only guess," said M. Lemaure drily.

"No," said Jem. "There's no money to be made there, nowadays."

"There's a name," said Monsieur. "Here and there."

"That's so," said Jem. "But your name's made, eh? Others have seen to that." He laughed with such frank slyness that M. Lucien could hardly forbear to respond. To his immense surprise he caught a likeness to Antoine in that passing manner. Such oddly innocuous sincerity had not been a characteristic of his siste , at least.

He did not really object to Jame , he told himself he could not help being big, and a trifle superfluous. If he would have the sense to hold off, and take up his just position in the andscape, he need not spoil the scene. M. Lucien intended to give him his dues, naturally, and regard all formalities. He even

made a kind of apology for using Antoine the next day, as they strolled back to the house together.

"What nature of thing is your club, anyway?" said Jem.

M. Lucien dilated on it gladly, for it was his secret pride. He took, as secretary, enormous pains about it, and though he grumbled without cessation at his colleagues, he really quite enjoyed the expenditure of energy necessary to keep such an organisation alive in a town like Roxminster, where the musical element, though on a high level of taste, was of the most easy-going and unenterprising description possible.

Jem lent an unappreciative ear.

"Do you smoke?" he asked.

"Of course," said his host.

"No feminine, then." He glanced at Madame, for they had reached the drawing-room.

"I never go near them," she said. "It is quite enough to hear them rehearsing eternally. Also that club-room in the town is a nasty little hole, that only men could tolerate. The arrangements made by men for themselves," said Madame thoughtfully, "are always so very comical. There is something pathetic in the pride they take in their little discomforts."

Her husband was drawn, as usual; and James, after attending amused for some moments, rose to his feet.

"You are not going to bed?" said his brother-in-law, turning with surprise.

"Well," said Jem, stretching his arms. "I've travelled half the world lately, and I'm getting on in years."

"Then," said M. Lemaure, rising too, "business must wait."

"Eh?" Jem turned. "No, if there's any business, we'll get through with it to-night. I'll come down again."

"You're going up?"

"The kid—Antoine—says he wants to show me something. I shall see him for a few minutes."

"Ah. Well, I shall be in the study."

James went up, primed with a lecture.

Tony was sitting, not in his bed where he should have been, but curled up at the open window. His father wondered if he was awake, he sat so still. In the faint daylight there was no more than an outline to be seen.

"This isn't the place to go to sleep, idiot," he said.

"I shall not go to sleep yet," said Tony, gently, picking up his head from the window-sill, where it had been reposing. "There is a lot to do first. Papa, is this you?" He spoke breathlessly, as his father came close to him in the twilight.

"You'd better make sure. Don't go talking secrets to the wrong person."

"I will make sure." He sprang swiftly on the window-seat, threw up an arm round his neck, and embraced him foreign-wise with the quick passion that brought the past crowding back to his father's memory. This was his baby, and no mistake. He clutched the boy's slight form in his arms, and drew him down into the window-seat.

"Do you mean to tell me you're still working?" he said, his jealousy flying back with the sense of possession.

"Working? Oh, no."

"You said you had lots to do before you went to bed."

"I didn't mean that. I have done my work."

"What's that paper, then?"

"That is what I had wanted to show you: but I think there is not enough light. Yes, now there is some of the moon also. It is so very small."

Edgell bent his head over the boy's shoulder to observe what he held. It was the exercise with which he had jested, as he could recognise even in the faint light; the manuscript was defaced now by scores and marks here and there from a critical pen, but it was not at these Antoine was gazing. Bringing it close to his father's eyes, he displayed a minute remark at the end, as follows: "Bien. Achevez."

"Is *that* all?" said James.

"All? I did not believe when he said it until I saw."

"Did he never tell you you'd done a thing well before?"

"Never like that: one 'bien' all alone. I finish, and he sends it to grandpapa. He tells me that. And when I had been so very late, to make him angry! But he is like that, yes!" He spoke with a strong thrill to the absent master.

Jame Edgell bit his lip in silence. He could not quite catch a special thought among many that besieged him. It may have been that here was a standard of education more strenuous than the school ideal he had come to uphold. It was a

little hard on so young a boy to have both crowded on him at once. However, he repeated to himself the claims of the other side, the sturdy faith inherited from English fathers. So after some lazy talk he presently began.

"Antoine. I told Phil I was going to jaw you."

Tony had been frowning at the moon. "Yes?" he said politely. "What about?"

"The way you behave at school."

"Oh—but I got a prize."

"Prizes are not everything," said Edgell solemnly. "I send you to school to educate you. And that means," he went on after a minute, "to teach you how to live."

"How to *live?*"

"Yes. Now see here: you can't go on like last term."

"Oh, no," said Antoine with conviction.

Edgell's lip curled slightly. "I'm glad we can agree. You must live your life like a man, my son; not with half a heart. You will never be a man worth a cent if you do that."

"No," breathed the boy. His hands were gripped close together as if he were holding something back. His father had hardly thought to be allowed to go on so long without interruption by such an impulsive culprit as this. He felt like a model parent as he proceeded.

"You weren't happy this last term?"

"No." His head sank lower.

"Why?"

"Because—I was doing the wrong thing?" There was a slight interrogation perceptible.

"It's a likely explanation," said Edgell. "Can you get any further?"

"Yes. Much further." A long breath. "I have thought, do you see, a great deal about it."

"Is that so? Let's hear the results of your thinking." He smiled in the dark. Tony always took him by surprise somewhere. There was a pause.

"When you've thought a lot, it's hard to begin, isn't it?"

"Begin anywhere. We'll sift out what matters."

"Perhaps really it began when I was ill last year."

"Very likely," said Jem nodding. "Bad health has a way of making a fellow morally lazy. I know that."

"Lazy? Oh, because I did not practise then? But grandpapa and the doctor would not let me practise, or read, or anything."

"I know that, my boy."

"But lazy—I was not that. If you knew how that was, to be ill, papa. I thought that I would die. At one time, with Savigny, I wanted to very much."

"Don't, child."

"It is only to show why I couldn't be lazy. I was all awake, all afraid, down here in my heart. Not always I could think, because of Savigny. But sometimes he forgot, and let me: and th-then it had to be thought so very quick."

"What did you think about?" said Jem gruffly. He longed to stop his recalling it.

"Of you—of Philippe—of the school—of the music. Mostly of that."

"Well, get on." He began to have a foreboding.

"If you had been there in Paris at Easter, I should have told you then. It would have been all the same then as now. But you were not there, and—and—it is the thing I could not write." His voice choked: Edgell could not have believed that a human body could so vibrate with the emotion of what he said.

"I couldn't come, my dear," he said sadly. "Tell me now, if you can."

"Yes, you must wait. If you wait, I will tell you."

"I am not going," said Jem, unlocking his feverish clutch. "Take the time you want."

"So when I was well, I went back to school. I did like that school, papa. I found it nice and curious. But this last term—how different."

"In what way?"

"How different to me. It was all the same as before, except they were more decent. But I had thought to know it was wrong; and so it hurt me inside, every day, every night—most of all the nights."

"*What* hurt you, my dear? I don't understand."

"The wrong-ness. I lived there: it was not real. I th-think it never had been. My real was *here:* I might not let it go out. I felt it there, I feel it."

"What?" He had clasped his hands high across his chest.

"The thing that I have got to do. All the things—when there is not much time."

There was complete silence. He had made himself clear at last.

"You are angry, papa?" he asked tremulously.

"Lord knows. I suppose not." Then he broke out. "You have all your life, boy. You are not fifteen."

"Isn't that old?"

"No—young. Ridiculously—scandalously young. Can't you play at being a kid a bit longer, if it's only to please me?"

"Would you like that? I will try, if you like it." His voice dragged with pure exhaustion. More than anything he had yet said, that sad submission drove the truth home to his father. Edgell had been taken unaware; he was vexed more than a little, disappointed profoundly, all but shocked indeed. But he admitted a truth presented, however ungrateful.

"Try again: pull through another term with that trouble 'especially at night,' and wear yourself out as I have found you worn." He said it to himself, not to Antoine. Suppose he tried keeping him at home a bit, till he got through with these nervous fancies. It was probably nothing more than a phase, consequent upon that singular breakdown last year. He could get him away from his uncle, to whose door he privately laid the blame of this state of things. He could look after "the kid" in person for six months, that was the best of it. Six months' relaxation he had earned, and though he had no notion of settling in England, it would not be half bad to linger a bit, and keep his eye on the boy. One phrase of his had struck him as morbid. He had barely noted it in passing, but it came back to his mind.

He thought it out slowly. Tony's heart sank at his silence.

"I must go?" he said, turning his head. The moon, now fully up in all the summer glory, shone in upon his face, making it yet whiter than by day. His eyes were dark and deep unspeakably by contrast, catching no glitter under their thick fringes. "S-say it, papa," he begged. "Don't not say anything." He clutched his English father.

"Here—give us a minute," said Jem, who was not ready.

"I shall go back: that is what you mean . . . see then, I will burn that." He put out his hand upon a pile of paper glimmering faintly white, that lay within reach on the table. "With that too, I can *not* bear it any more. Burn, and it will be finished."

Edgell, after a minute, swept his hand off, and took up the pile. "Manuscript, eh?" he said, examining them in the white light. "More exercises, Tony?"

"No, not exercises. Those he burns himself. These he would burn too, if he knew, but he does not know."

A sort of anguish of pride was in the tone: his eyes were riveted on the sheets his father held.

"Eh? Writing out of school, you rascal? I remember, Phil said you had written songs."

"These are not songs," with contempt. "Those were little things. These are big, and I have not finished them. There was so little time."

"You wrote all this at school?" said Edgell, with sharp and sudden suspicion.

"No, no"—the boy shrank. "Except a little. Really I wrote very little."

"But you had them there?"

"Yes; and when they were there, sometimes I must think of them. Sometimes it made me feel—like that again." His hand was across his eyes. Edgell caught the wrist of the hand. "Yes, I know, papa: it is all right," he said with singular steadiness. "You shall burn them for me." Then, as Edgell hesitated, a burst of passion came. "You shall! for I can not."

Jem laid the papers he held back on the table, almost reverently. Original enterprise—creation—the phenomenon in the world that he respected most, and from the hands and head of his youngest child! His heart had leapt within him to hold it, and much of the bitterness of the last ten minutes was swept away.

"Destroy what you have made?" he said, with a short laugh. "Is it likely? Your uncle can do that, not I. I'll keep it if you like—in the safest place I know. Will that do as well?" And I'll keep you too, he longed to say, as the boy lay rigid and exhausted. He suspected how one word would

have set him thrillingly, eagerly alive again. He simply dared not say it, under the charm of this return to his own, and of the misleading moonlight. He must have time to think and weigh the possibly vital consequences. He was badly perplexed, and he scarcely knew how much time passed in silence before he spoke again.

"It's time you were in bed," he said suddenly. "You're half asleep."

He wanted to think so, at least; he did not believe he was, after his recent profound passion. As he still did not move, he lifted him with ease and put him into bed, packing him safe with businesslike precision. As he rose he found himself gripped with one strong hand.

"You're *not* angry, papa?"

"I'll get over it," said James.

"I think I am glad I have told you that," said Tony faintly.

"Well, yes. I guess you may be that," said Edgell with emphasis. "You've done the straight thing in telling, and you've told the right man."

"I couldn't have told anybody else."

"Eh? Not your uncle?"

"Papa!"

"Not your grandfather?"

"Before I had told you?"

"Not your brother?"

"Oh no! He so loves the school."

"So do I. It's mine as much as his."

"Yes, I know. I am sorry." The pain in his tone this time was more than Jem, even in the character of the exemplary parent, could bear. He bent and kissed him brusquely.

"You're a blessed little idiot," he said; and then he left him alone and went downstairs.

M. Lucien glanced at the clock as he entered: it had registered some thirty minutes instead of three. Even now his defaulting brother-in-law did not seem inclined to settle to business. He walked restlessly to the window and observed that it was a fine night. He stood some time there, gnawing his finger and looking out. The master of the house

wrote steadily and serenely the while, tossing letter after letter upon the pile beside him, and laying those answered in a box. His arrangements were beautiful, and any really practical man should have admired them; but when Jem walked back at last to the table he found it for some reason annoying.

"I always chuck my post on to the floor," he observed.

"Then," said M. Lemaure, "you have to stoop to pick them up. Or do you make the domestic do that?"

"Do it myself. Good exercise," said Jem.

"I have not your figure, James," said Monsieur. "And I find method saves time."

"Hang method," said Jem. "You've method in teaching, now, I bet."

"I trust so."

"Snub methodically, eh? Your pupils haven't much conceit of themselves."

"Indeed? That is well. Which of my pupils do you know?"

"Only one: and I know uncommonly little of him, worse luck."

"Has that baby been complaining of me?" said M. Lemaure, smiling slightly.

"No," said Edgell, walking away again. "He's thankful for small mercies."

"Four letters long," said Monsieur, with perfect comprehension. "I thought he would be pleased by that. But the work deserved it," he added, sorting out some papers. "It shows what he can do when he fixes his mind."

"You want him to go eternally with his mind fixed on your miserable little blots and figures?"

"Certainly. If he is to live a professional life, the sooner he learns to concentrate and save time, the better for him."

"Who said he was to lead a professional life?" said Edgell, stopping in his restless perambulation of the carpet.

"I have been waiting," said M. Lemaure, glancing again at the clock, "for the last forty minutes, for you to come down and say it to me. It has been understood: but I imagine it rests with you to say it once for all: and it is time."

"I imagine it rests with me," said Edgell, stopping again

his back to his brother-in-law. "And what if I say he shall not?"

"You will break his heart," said Monsieur quietly.

"His? Sure you don't mean yours?"

"And ours. But that is a separate affair."

Dead silence.

"Your father wishes it too?"

"I feel sure he has always wished it: quite sure, though he has been careful to say nothing. He never would speak, if you did not, though he has given the boy the most valuable part of his training."

Another pause. "And you and he," said the engineer slowly, "will consider this training wasted if he does not eventually play in public?"

"No," said M. Lemaure promptly. "It is never wasted. It is a fine education in thoroughness and self-control, the finest there is."

"And yet it will break your heart—if I do not give him up—to the populace?"

"To his career," M. Lucien corrected.

"*And*—it will break his?"

"You should know that," remarked the uncle, looking up.

"I know it, to-night for the first time. How the deuce do you?" He came up close to the writing-table. They looked straight at one another for a minute.

"Bah," said M. Lucien, turning aside. "I have taught him constantly for two years. I ought to know him. His purpose wavered for a bit, but of late it has set in the necessary direction. Is that not so?"

Jem Edgell stood a second longer, and then dropped his big form into a chair.

"Deuce take it, yes," he said, running his hands through his hair. "You all seem to know more than I. I suppose I shall have to give him up to bondage, sooner or later. But—it's a bit hard on a fellow to have to think of that the first night."

The little Frenchman's smile was a trifle disdainful.

"It's the way, with boys," he said.

"Perhaps. There's Phil. I came home prepared to give my mind to his profession, though even that at leisure. But

this—why, I had hold of him just now, and there's nothing of him, worth mentioning."

"Really?" said M. Lucien. "Well, we shall have to reckon with what there is. There's a letter or two here"—he sorted through one of his orderly boxes,—"which you can look at when you feel inclined. They might interest you. But I believe now you are indisposed to further discussions. Have a cigar?"

Whatever M. Lemaure's habits and manners were, his tobacco was very good. The same liberal spirit inspired his cigars as produced the beautiful room in the wing: a genuine love of what is good before all other considerations. During the next ten minutes James began to forgive him his want of tact and sympathy. Fifteen had not passed before a large hand insinuated itself by Monsieur's elbow, and closed on the two letters he had put conspicuously aside. One was concise, inscribed in the small pointed hand of business. The other large, sprawling and magnificent. After that silence reigned for some time in the room.

Having finished his correspondence to the last post-card, the master of the house turned out his reading-lamp and went to the hearth. His brother-in-law was still lying back in his chair, silent, with the letters on his knee and his hand across his face.

"You are tired, James," said M. Lemaure, not even sure if he had read them, for he made no remark.

"Yes," he said. "I'm an older man than I thought. Lucien, when did you get these?" He tapped the papers with the other hand.

"One is about a year back, just before he broke down. I gave a lecture at the College, and the little one illustrated for me, because I had hurt my hand. I had no idea Harland was there, until he wrote. That, of course, I simply refused by return. Old Baumann heard him among a mixed concourse at that wretched school—where every one seems to be united to undo my work—this spring. He asked him a question or two on the spot, and discovered my address from the register. It's a tremendous offer, even from a soft-hearted Jew. The flattery is grotesque, of course, but I believe the feeling's genuine. I should double my clientele

to-morrow if I could publish it," said Monsieur pensively his eyes on the sprawling letter. Edgell toyed with it too.

"And I haven't yet heard him play," he said slowly. "My little bit of a boy."

"You could hear him to-morrow, if you wished," said Monsieur, leaning back against the chimney-piece. "But I do not advise you to. He will not be at his best with a second-rate accompanist, in that miserable room. He is still very unequal, for he can as yet scarcely depend on his strength. But his best is worth listening to." In spite of himself, his voice dropped, and the ring of pride crept through.

"What's the good of my hearing him?" Edgell burst out. "I'm not a confounded manager, to reckon the market value of every note he makes." He flicked the letters off his knee. "I want to hear him play as he used to me: when he was hardly big enough to hold the fiddle, and his mother had to keep the place with her finger in the book. That's what I liked and what I want—music that is worth the name. That's what I came home for, thanking my stars I'd left the damned money-getting scuffles behind me on the other side. Where's the use of coming to England if one can't call one's children one's own? I've a mind to go back to-morrow, and let you and the Hebrew vultures settle it between you."

"Unfortunately," said M. Lemaure, "you are his guardian. Had it been otherwise, I should never have approached a subject which vexes you so much. As it is"—he turned about—"I have done wrong to approach it to-night, and I ask your pardon, Jem. We will say no more until you have considered at your leisure. The thing has been on my own mind so long that I am over-eager to shift it to yours."

"Confound you," said the Englishman, rising. "You're a good fellow, and words can't say what I owe you. But you've not got kids, Lucien."

"No," said Monsieur calmly. "And heaven left out sentiment in my composition, no doubt for its own good reasons." He gathered the managers' letters from the floor. "For all that," he said, turning to put them carefully away, "it has been a vast pleasure to have your children here, for both of us. It has diverted me: and as for Cécile, she has

never been so well as since she had that big boy of yours to play with. I think the debt is equal."

"Lord grant it is, for I've not much to pay it with," said Edgell, chucking his cigar-end into the coals.

"Unless it is to refrain from depriving us of them," said Monsieur, with his most composed suavity.

"Oh, they'll probably go on belonging to other people," said Edgell with a rueful laugh. "I'm not one to settle, and they're used to it. Phil's at bottom a cordial soul, and will make his own belongings. And as for the other—dashed if I think he ever did belong to anybody."

"I am also aware at times of that sentiment," said Monsieur.

II

M. LEMAURE went into town early to settle some business at the music-shop which hired his club the room for their concerts, leaving Antoine to follow by the midday train. He gave him exact directions as to what he was to do, and then forgot about him, as was his custom; for the boy was quite used to being independent, and for all his absence of mind, could generally be trusted to shift for himself, and turn up when he was wanted.

The heat at midday was remarkable, but Antoine was so concerned about his strings on the way down to the station at Quainton, that he hardly thought about such a minor point as personal discomfort until he and the violin were safely installed. Then he had leisure to remember it, as it is not hard to do in the month of August in a leisurely country train, which waits at every possible open station in blazing sun to be roasted slowly through and through.

Antoine talked to a postman and a farmer's wife, who accompanied him for short stages of the journey, to distract his mind from the strings and the stuffiness. Then, being left solitary, he lost himself in a dream that was half a doze, until at the junction for Roxminster three men jumped into the carriage. At one of these, a dark clean-shaven man with a clever face, he found himself staring sleepily.

"Uncle Ted!"

"Hey?" said the gentleman turning. "Hullo, Antoine, what are you after? Going to Roxminster?"

":But you," said Antoine, quite disturbed.

"I am too. Your father got my telegram when you started?"

"Telegram? But he was started before me."

"Eh? Hang it all. He said afternoon. I wired to him to come into town instead."

"It was so hot: he started early. Oh—you will not be there?"

"Certainly not, if I am here. What a bother. I hoped to stop him. Did he go by train?"

"No, by the bicycle. He started at ten."

Huntly Edgell considered.

"He'll be through Roxminster long ago. No chance of his stopping, you think?"

"He might stop to bathe," said Tony reflecting.

"Up by the bridge, eh? Yes, that's our old place. I've a mind to send you after him, boy. I've got business in the town."

"So have I," said Antoine.

One of the other men, who was attending, laughed.

"What's your business—tuckshop?" he inquired.

Antoine, who was nursing the violin to spare it all the jarring possible, laid a hand on it for answer.

"Business more in your line than ours, Salkowski," said his uncle, looking at the member of the party who had not yet spoken. This personage, clearly a foreigner, was lying back apparently in great exhaustion in a corner. "You're all for art, I understand."

"One takes a lesson in the town, eh?" he said, casting a somewhat contemptuous look over to the boy. "But the saints protect me from the music of a country town." He spoke lazily, in a rich voice, with an unattractive guttural accent. Antoine took a general survey of him, and then looked out of the window. He was not an agreeable object.

"Is music another of your subjects?" said Huntly.

"Another?" He gave a satisfied laugh. "It is the first, dear friend. The principal. My earliest, onliest love." He smiled sweetly, and then yawned, "If there is a respectable organ in your cathedral, I will play it. I cannot play bad ones—my soul revolts."

"I think," said Edgell, "in this case the organist will revolt as well. I have heard Thursfield's a martinet; but try by all means." He met Antoine's look. "You know Dr. Thursfield, Tony, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Think I had better try?" said the foreigner, turning upon him a sleepy eye.

"No," said Antoine, drawing slightly back.

The sharp-eyed uncle opposite was instantly aware of his aversion, in part no doubt because he shared it.

"How's your father, Tony?" he said, leaning forward as though to protect him. "Just the same as ever?"

"Just the same." The boy flashed a look up. "You will go home soon to see him?" he suggested wistfully.

"As soon as I can get off, of course. But I'll probably miss him."

"But he will stay for you."

"Think so? Of course if he's the sense to stay"—Huntly pondered on the conjunction of James and his wife, and bit his lip—"I'll keep him over the night. That meet with any objection?"

"No," said Tony, with obvious melancholy.

"I'd have you over too," said his uncle kindly, "only the house is crowded, worse luck." He dropped his voice: by which Antoine gathered that the regret was for his father's sake. He shared it, if the man in the corner was among his uncle's guests. That man's voice had been uplifted in argument while their short colloquy was taking place. He talked still of his "earliest love" to the acquaintance beside him, who was conspicuously bored with the subject. The talk was eloquent in its way, expressed with a cleverness that was rather showy, and a constant satire that was tiresome. Huntly Edgell bit his lip again, and looked as if he longed to interrupt; when he was saved the trouble by Antoine's string, which burst inside the violin-case with a resounding clang, making him and the rhetorician in the corner jump simultaneously.

"Hé, hé!" he said with a funny air. "There's a protest against the climate with which I quite agree."

He resumed his remarks, but he had an eye to the boy, who, as they were stopping at a station, promptly took out the instrument to remedy the mishap while he had leisure.

"Do you take lessons from this Thursfield?" he interrupted himself to ask, watching his neat manipulation of the strings with a certain curiosity.

"No, sir."

"I asked," said Mr. Salkowski to his indifferent companion, "because these English country organists usually profess four or five instruments. Their versatility is as astonishing as their incapacity."

Antoine had had enough.

"Dr. Thursfield is my friend," he remarked, looking up while he tested his new string.

Salkowski fixed him with his eyeglass for a moment.

"May I have the honour to convey your compliments when I call?" he drawled.

"He will not be in his house."

"Indeed? Why?"

"Because he will be at the concert."

"Concert?" The stranger woke up a little. "What concert's that?"

"Ours," said Antoine.

"Yours? And who are you?"

"Perhaps," said the Member for Roxminster, withdrawing his protection, since he felt it superfluous, "I had better introduce you. My brother's younger son, Salkowski. Antoine, this is Mr. Salkowski, who knows about everything, and Persian manuscripts in particular."

"You flatter me," said the distinguished man.

"Not at all. I think you know Lemaure, eh?"

"Which? I know plenty of Lemaures. They are people to know."

"Lucien Lemaure."

"Lucien, eh? That's the stupid one. There's always one in a clever family."

"You'd better ask this kid."

"You know him, youngster? Ha, you learn from him possibly?"

"Yes," said Tony. "He is my uncle."

"Oh—come,come! Such uncles on both sides," murmured Salkowski, rather taken aback.

"I am not stupid," Huntly Edgell observed.

"Edgell! I am always so rash! A jest merely—I do not know him."

"You would not jest about him if you did. Eh, Tony?"

"Aha!" said Salkowski, getting more comfortable. "He is severe. I approve him then. Severity is the mark of the good teacher, the good artist, the good anything. *I* am severe," with a radiant smile. "I have a high standard." He lifted his hand shoulder-high from the floor. "I will have

the *best*, but the very best." He spoke with ogreish playfulness, smacking his lips. "Ha! What do you think of that?"

"I think it is rather greedy," said Antoine, as his uncle did not seem inclined to respond. The other man laughed, which nettled Salkowski.

"You resemble the Lemaures when I think of it," he said, using his eyeglass again. "You never mean to tell me you're the son of Henriette?"

He had a flash in return which disconcerted him. During the pause, while Antoine clipped the violin into its case with precision, the distinguished man turned a little red. He had meant deliberately to be "rash" again, but he had overdone t. To cover his mistake, he began hastily to examine the boy for further details of the Club, which he gave in his usual offhand manner: with the effect of increasing every moment the Russian's curiosity.

"I think one must go," he said to Edgell in French.

"I fear that one can't," said Antoine politely in the same tongue.

"Why not, my child? Are the public not admitted?"

"Not unless they belong to the Club: or unless one invites them."

"Do you belong?"

"I don't know," said Antoine, shifting his eyes. Again the onlookers laughed.

"Oh, but I am coming! It is a good concert, you say?"

"It is not the best," said the boy.

"Good, good," smiled Salkowski. "A point for you. But how do you know that?"

"My uncle has said this is not a good day."

"Oh, it is the worst *day* in the world," yawned the Russian. "But that is no one's fault. Who's the soloist?"

"I am," said Tony. He sat serenely under the laughter, this time unanimous.

"That's why it is not a good day," his uncle suggested. "Is that what Lemaure meant?"

"No," said Tony, considering. "I think he meant the other days were better. He says they have been good, during this summer. The Cathedral looks beautiful, over there."

He glanced ingenuously out. But Salkowski was not to be distracted. He was beginning to scent a discovery.

"Come, my infant. If you play, you may invite."

"I think," said Antoine, fixing the spires absently, "there are some rules."

"What rules?"

"I never can remember: there are a great lot."

"Who makes them up?"

"They all do."

"Who's *they?*"

"Dr. Thursfield and my uncle and Mr. Varell and the other men. They are always making them up."

"Dear me; but then there is nobody to keep them. Ha, ha! I have you!"

"Well," said Antoine. "The men didn't, at first. So then they made a rule that who did *not* keep them should be turned out from the Club."

"Mon Dieu!" said the clever stranger, gaping. "And is that kept?"

"Oh yes," said Tony, "by my uncle." Meeting Huntly's eye, he laughed suddenly, falling back into his corner.

"You have had some lively times at that Club," the Member said.

"Yes—they do fight; but the music is very good, generally." He put a hand on the door, as the train began to slacken.

"But look here," Salkowski cried hastily in French. "Your uncle cannot turn you out if you are playing?"

"No," his antagonist admitted.

"Well then, he cannot do anything else." The boy raised his eyebrows comically.

"Uncles can do lots of things," Huntly remarked.

"You need not try to run away, little one. I accompany you. Where do we go?"

"I go to some shops for my aunt," said the boy, looking away.

"He has not invited you," Antoine's uncle observed. He had been attending with interest. He was sorry for Antoine, but he privately longed to be rid of his dear friend.

"He will!" the stout Russian cried vivaciously, "Or I go uninvited. Wait for me, my little friend."

He bundled after Antoine, who had slipped hastily out of the train as it ran up to Roxminster platform.

Huntly Edgell reached home after all sooner than he had expected, and as by that time James had, as he would have said, "got through with Sylvia," the brothers could have all the talk they wanted on the lawn. Just for the first ten minutes of reunion Huntly felt more awkward than he could have wished. In his fine linen, on his beautifully rolled turf, he felt so badly the successful man; and though the wanderer's eye beamed friendliness merely, he could not help by his own appearance emphasising the point.

"This is gorgeous," said James, taking in his trim surroundings, when he had completed his personal inspection.

"I can't help it," said the Member hastily. "Gardeners think they are paid to snip the character off everything, and I can't take the time to educate them."

"Oh," said Jem, still scanning absently. "I like things shipshape. It's deuced pretty. I hadn't realised the size of you, though," he added, glancing round with a glint of humour.

"I've got a landscape attached to me in these days," said Huntly, "and a beastly fag it is."

"Bigger than you can dig," said James. "Yes, it would worry me. But it looks to me as if you had got the hang of it. And I suppose you've county business too; and political——"

"And a family," the Member summed it up.

"Two," corrected Jem. "Yes, you've a sight to run. I wonder you don't look older, Ted."

All the same, he thought him older, as he shot him a keen glance: and something more than old as well.

"How does the Guthrie connection work out?" he asked. "It's a girl, isn't it?"

"Isabel's a jewel," said Huntly shortly. "That's all you can say. A sort of a rest-cure from the rest of womankind."

Jem marked the touch of bitterness in the tone.

"I envy you," he said quietly. "A daughter thrown in, good Lord. It's more than you deserve—at your age." He tried to finish lightly, without success.

"Did you want a daughter, Jem?" said Huntly in sheer surprise. His brother's look was revelation. "Why the deuce don't you marry again? You've money enough, haven't you?"

"Yes, I've money enough," said the engineer. But no more details came though Huntly pined to know. "I shall have to jaw you professionally about my affairs, but that can wait."

"Don't let it wait too long, that's all," said the younger, acutely. He was up and forgetting to smoke.

"If I don't place it, I'll be chucking it away," said Jem, easily forestalling his thoughts. "Don't worry, old boy; you shall find snug corners for most of it. But I'm here to have a good time, don't you forget that."

"Confound you," said Huntly, half-vexed, half-amused. "Any one would think you were a lad home for the holidays."

"Just what I am," said Jem. "And it's the best sort of idea. Can't think why I never did it before. Now leave that crafty expression, which always did make me want to kick you"—Huntly dropped back helplessly, and resorted to smoking again—"and tell me about your own property."

"What?" The landed proprietor was puzzled.

"Henry. Ah, that's better." For the Member's face changed oddly on the word. "Haven't I been leading up to Henry from the start? As if anything else really matters."

"Jem, you—" He flung down the match in his hand. "You're on the spot, as usual. Hal does matter. The worst of it is he knows it. He's as clever as the deuce, and knows our plans for him almost before we know them ourselves."

Jem nodded. "Phil was like that."

"Was he? Yes, he was a bit, I remember. Well he's turned out normal enough."

"Quite normal. School helps that kind of lad. Can't Hal get to school?"

"I wish I dared," said Huntly, sighing bitterly. "He's really such a weakling. I mean, it's more than mother's notions, Jem. I dare all sorts of things when he's not there, and then his little peaky face——"

"It's been anxious work bringing him up, eh?" James sat forward sympathetically. He was a pleasant listener, Huntly realised, a feeling revived from old days.

"Anxious? We've all but lost him twice; and it's always touch and go when he catches cold."

"Lungs?"

"Not quite: bronchial though." But Jem would not have it; he required to know, and gave his clever brother no peace until he had gathered the precise medical evidence. Huntly was astonished by his knowledge, and consoled by the reassurances resulting from his exact observations of treatment. It seemed—like so many things with Jem—to be one of his private interests, and an accurate mind as usual turned it to profit. There was nothing that was picturesque in his stories, but much that was pointed. Little by little the weight on the Member's mind lifted, as he realised to his surprise that other boys were as his, and other fathers troubled with a sense of the same vague menace about the heads of their prized ewe-lambs.

"I say, you seem to have noticed children a bit," said Huntly at last.

"I've got children," said Jem. "That brings it under my business."

"All very well. You haven't attended to yours much."

Jem laughed good-humouredly.

"I brought up one till he was as old as yours. Don't you brag."

Huntly realised this as fact. "Then you left him on the world," he remarked.

"I considered he was fit to be left. So he turned out."

"Who's bragging now? What about the other, too, answer me that. Was he fit to be left without your benignant eye?"

Jem was silent a second—then he said solemnly: "They were healthy kids."

"Humph. Didn't Philip nearly die of pneumonia at school?"

"That," Jem explained, "was his own confounded folly. I'd told him fifty times his life was in his own hands if he got a chill on the top of heating. He couldn't say he hadn't been warned—young fool!"

Huntly began to laugh. "Hear the tender father. What about Antoine last year? I suppose that was his confounded folly too. Eh, Jem?" For Edgell did not speak.

"Not his," he said at last. But his brother saw he had been hit.

"You're fighting on thin ground," he said acutely, "and you know it. But perhaps you thought Antoine's business was chiefly fuss. I know Sylvia said—" he looked at Jem. "Sorry, old boy. Women's gossip is generally misleading. You worried, eh?"

"I was in hell for five months," said Jem, looking over his head. "The worst was—I could have told them. Nothing was needed but a little anticipating; the plainest kind of precautions."

"Dear me. I had an idea the whole thing was more—well—intangible. It was mysterious enough to an outsider." Huntly was a trifle amused; it consoled him that Jem should fuss too, after his talk on the subject. "How you could let the foreign quacks experiment behind your back," he said, almost with a shudder.

James gathered himself together.

"Savigny is no quack—nor even a stranger to me. I knew him in life for a year, and had known him through his books for ten. Lemaure knew him as a personal friend. As to experimenting, he did that with my full permission. He said would I do the service to science, and I wired consent at once. They took no single step without my approval, Ted. I want you to have that clear. I was proud—and confident—and as anxious as the devil." Jem wiped his brow and paused.

"Well, you've certainly thrown a new light on it," said Huntly, interested in spite of himself. "Where did you pick up that impersonal enthusiasm for science?"

"I didn't pick it up. It has always been in me. Phil has succeeded to it, I'm glad to say. Health's the burning question of the world, isn't it? And health of the brain before all. And where's the use of tinkering here and tampering there if we are not ready to make a big sacrifice now and again? I may never get another opportunity in this life." He was obviously profoundly serious.

Huntly fidgeted. Old Jem was always the same: ideals and notions, and no grain of solid success to show for it.

"Of course," he said, "if you knew the doctor it makes a

difference. But personally, granted I ever could do it, which I never could, I'd have had to be on the spot. Whereas I suppose you did your day's work in California as usual, while they were using your kid like a scientific guinea-pig in Paris."

"Yes, I did my work," said Jem. "I could have done no good by coming home, anyway. Lemaure was on the spot, as you say, but he could do nothing. We had to trust Savigny. I think," said Jem, with thoughtful justice, "it was even harder for Lemaure."

"The boy's an asset to his mother's people, I suppose," said Huntly. "They value his music." Jem nodded, and Huntly spoke no more of the Lemaures. He knew little of them, and cared less, apart from their more immediate relation o his brother. Jem's cranks always amused him. He asked if he proposed to make any further sacrifices in the direction of Science with a great S. Jem considered.

"If ever Savigny's biography is written," he said, "I shall have to publish the letters he wrote me. It would be a sacrifice, too, for they're full of intimate detail. But I'd have to make them known. Anything more magnificent—more clear—more gentle,—there's a great fellow if you like. Quack, indeed!"

"I'm sure I beg his pardon," the Member smiled. "Quack was a loose word. I can't stand doctors as a rule."

"That's a bother for you, if you ever have to trust to them. Wait till you have the sort of debt I have to Savigny: though he's more than a doctor, certainly."

"He's high on your pet pedestal," said Huntly. "You always had some one there, didn't you, Jem? Lord, it's odd to find you just what you were at sixteen!" He felt very comfortable in his armour again by this time. "Well, I shouldn't think you have to bother any further about Tony now. To judge by what I saw of him, he's more than fit to look after himself." He had told Jem about the meeting in the train. "I say, why didn't you bring some family along? I thought you said you meant to."

"Philip," said Jem, solemnly, "is suffering from a headache." He chuckled suddenly. "Lor', I do have fun with Phil. It's this way: he came down to breakfast when we had all finished about ten, feeling interesting. 'Should he

lend me his bicycle, because his aunt thought he had better not ride.' Perfect picture he looked as he said it too." Jem paused to stuff his pipe.

"Lots of people," said Huntly, "say he reminds 'em of me."

"I don't," said Jem promptly. "Neither looks nor other things. He's got a variety of the old devil quite different from yours."

Huntly grinned, and he continued.

"Anyway I was level with him. 'Don't want to come, eh?' says I. 'That's just as well, because I was going to forbid you to.' You should have seen him jump! He had had sunstroke once as a kid, so the thing had passed through my mind. Beastly lucky I'd thought of it."

"Well," ejaculated the Member. "Of all disrespectful parents!"

"Oh, he's just the same sweet humbug he was at ten years old," said Jem, "when our games were continuous, so I ought to know. Add to that, all round spoiling has made him take himself as serious as the Scriptures—and there you are."

"I suppose when you forbade him, he wanted to go with you," said Huntly, whose sympathies were quite with his nephew in this matter.

"Second thoughts—yes, he rather did. Day was cooler than he expected—quite a breeze there was. Hadn't had a sunstroke for years. Way here a bit hard for me to find alone—twelve miles on English roads!" Jem paused to chortle. "All the rest of it, quite conclusive. So I sent the kid to fetch me a map, and advised Phil to go in and lie down. Gave him the word to, in fact," said the engineer—"quite startled my little kid alongside—and there was an end of him."

"Suppose he really had a headache?"

"Oh, he had," said Jem calmly, "but he needn't have mentioned it. I told him he was coming last night. It's partly Cécile's fault, of course, but he's no right to give in. He's a baby," Edgell finished.

"Think so? I had an idea you'd find him rather forward. I like an argument with Phil."

"Oh, it's not the brains," said Jem. "His head's in front of the rest of him." He paused, and then abandoned the

attempt to explain. "I guess he's over-educated," he concluded comfortably.

"Like me," Huntly chuckled.

"Like you—that part."

"What's he going on to—have you fixed?"

"More or less. He knows his own mind, that's one comfort. I've told him he can read medicine in Edinburgh, or London, or Paris: he can choose—so long as it's a capital." James grinned now at his brother's alarmed face of protest. "Come on," he said. "Speak up for your little garden-cities, do."

"He's cut out for Oxford," Huntly cried. "And he wants to, I bet. You've been bullying him, Jem."

"Not much," said James. "My one fear is, he'll be a young gentleman in spite of it. He's a bit too bluish-green for my tastes as it is. You can't walk the street without catching that nowadays. So I reckon the public schools have a go of it too—once a year, when they're through with the measles."

"You simply don't deserve him," declared the Member quite warmly. "I never heard of such rank waste! When you've got the money, and he's got the brains—a boy like that, well set up, well-bred, well-equipped—he'd sweep the board at Oxford, if you gave him half a chance."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Jem, with maddening serenity.

"It's nothing but arrogance," said Huntly. "I tell you it is, yours as much as ours. Just because you kept clear of it, you think there's nothing in it."

"I read for a year at Cambridge," Jem observed, contemplating him. As a fact, he had withdrawn on his father's death, to give a chance to his brilliant younger brother.

Huntly was only thrown out for a second, however: his electioneering had served him.

"And you tell me you didn't enjoy it," he said.

"Never told you any such thing. It was the dearest little time of my life—as pretty as a picture. When nights were hot in Egypt six years back, and I couldn't sleep for fever, I've thought of that little river and the trees," said Jem, "and the nice young fellers playing around among them. If the point was to enjoy yourself—I'd shunt Phil right

there to-morrow. Don't you make any mistake about that."

"Have you said so to him?" said Huntly, with guarded satire.

"No." Jem was blunt.

"He's a willing sacrifice, is he?"

"He's all right: he cares for his work. If he's real assiduous for a year," he added, with a sudden twinkle, "may be I'll let him make up some poetry for a treat."

"Well!" Huntly gave him up. "I sincerely hope he'll fall in love with a lady's maid before half that year is out, and turn the tables on you, poetry and all."

"No such luck for him," said Jem earnestly. Then he had to pull up, and the colour showed in his brown face, as Huntly collapsed into his chair.

"You're colossal," his brother gasped. "You've still got faith in females."

"Oh well," said Jem, "I ain't an Oxford man. I tell you Ted," he broke out, "if my Phil could make a real right-down fool of himself just once, I'd back him to be as good as any one. But he can't, poor lad, with this green-sickness they all get nowadays. Till he's worked his skin off, which'll take a mighty time, he's no chance."

"Chance," cried Huntly. "They'll be at him in a year."

"That," James explained gravely, "ain't the kind of chance I mean." And he added with pleading, "Get off it, Ted."

So Huntly, still the younger brother in spite of all the interval which had passed, had to "get off"; and soon after they rose to walk round the grounds.

III

WHAT with Huntly's late appearance, and the time subsequently devoted to gossip, Jem made himself so late returning that, arriving at Roxminster in good time for the last train, he mentally tossed up whether he should not take it. On passing through the Close he was decided thereto by the sight of his own party, which he had quite forgotten. They were walking slowly ahead of him in the direction of the station, discussing the events of the afternoon so ardently that Jem, pushing the bicycle, came up behind unperceived.

"Who let him in originally, I should like to know?" said M. Lemaure.

"I didn't," said the tall thin man, who was walking in the middle, "did you, Antoine?"

"No, no. I tried to make him keep out." The boy's voice had a sound of strain, to his father's sharp ears.

"It was your fault he came, in the first instance," M. Lemaure growled. "It is not the first time you have picked up acquaintances who were a nuisance to yourself and other people."

"Well, Antoine suffered for it," said the tall man, putting a hand of protection on his shoulder. "We'll have up the subject at the next committee, Lemaure. It's time the rule about visitors was seen to. Rule number ninety-six"—he turned to the boy—"'No extraneous visitors unless they can control their enthusiasm.' Rule number ninety-seven: 'No encores of any sort with the thermometer at 70.' I have just made them up, and I am President of the Club."

"Then as President, Thursfield, you might keep lunatics from entering it." M. Lemaure's temper had manifestly been jarred by late events.

"Oh, I can't do that," said the tall organist gently, "because so many are in it already. Here, I say, I have got to go back. Good-night, lunatic." He took his hand off Antoine's shoulder as they stopped at the station turn. The others turned round when he did, and there was a general exclamation.

"Thought I'd overhaul you," said Jem calmly, "but I was collecting a few secrets first."

"Ah, James," said M. Lemaure, smoothing his brow. "You know Thursfield, eh?"

"No," said Jem. "It was old Hugueson in my time."

The two tall men shook hands, exchanging a look of interest as they did so.

"Been having a warm time, eh?" said James: and his eyes fell on his son for an instant.

"Don't revive the subject," Thursfield pleaded. "We're so sick of it, aren't we, Antoine? The moral is, really, open the window. We were wrangling like cats in that hole, and all for want of a little air."

"You turned faint, eh?" said Jem, sharply.

"No, not quite." Thursfield answered for him. "Only, you see, he doesn't smoke, so he felt it the most. His head went round with the lot of us, and no wonder."

"Turned your head, did they?" said Jem.

"Yes. It was turned a little," said Tony, thoughtfully.

Even M. Lemaure joined in the laugh. Then he turned to his brother-in-law.

"You ride your bicycle home, James?" he suggested.

"No. It shall travel on the train. I'll come on with you."

"You would be at Brackenhall as soon as we should."

"This way I'll be there before," said Jem. "I'll ride up from Quainton and order supper for you."

"It seems a remarkable taste," M. Lucien observed, "to ride in the hottest portion of the day, and refuse to ride in the evening."

"I've a pass on the line," said Jem looking at the sunset, "and I want to use it."

"You are as great a child as Antoine."

"A bigger one, I guess," said Jem. "Go ahead, Tony, and get me a ticket for the bicycle."

The boy went on, and M. Lemaure, who kept a very sharp eye on him, followed. The pair they left strolled slowly along the station road, whence the view of the Cathedral, its trees, and the sunset behind invited to lingering.

"He had to play twice because a cad demanded it," said Thursfield briefly. "Lemaure wanted to turn him out, there

was a bit of a row, and some of the fools hissed. I think the baby was rather frightened."

"Thanks," said Jem. "I like to be posted." They went on in silence for a minute.

"I have wanted to know you," said Thursfield suddenly, "ever since I knew Antoine. We are friends, he and I. He has often spoken of you."

"You won't get much further by knowing me, if that's it," said Jem.

"That's not it. I don't want to get further."

"You think you understand him?"

"It's quite a simple nature," said Thursfield. "The difficulty is to simplify oneself to meet it; but I find it comes with practice. I like practising. I hope you've no objection."

"I'm much obliged," said Edgell. "He's in luck to make such friends."

"No luck about it, excuse me. I've done nothing for him but give him a quiet time occasionally. I remember wanting that when I was a boy of his age, and not getting it. Boys don't much."

"Were you like that?" said Jem bluntly.

"Like—no. I was the solitary-seeking sort of boy. But I sought all the time: I never found—that maddening, tiring rapture." His eyes were fixed vaguely on the way before him, for he carried himself a little bent. "It's not the lot of many."

Edgell was silent. His calculating eye measured the distance still left them to traverse, and suddenly he spoke.

"I shouldn't wonder," he said, "if you're the man to advise me."

Thursfield's kind deep-set eyes looked round at him. "Yes?"

"It seems cool on such short acquaintance. But I've rushed my life so that all my acquaintances are short."

"I see. For instance, with your own sons." Thursfield came to meet him.

"That's it. You'll take me right if I speak. In a fashion I know him. In a fashion I've got him by heart."

"Better than any man," said Thursfield quietly. "I believe that."

"Yes, you believe it. The Lemaures don't, confound them. They're sweeping him from me at such a rate that I'm on the edge of acting like a fool, and regretting it ever afterwards." He paused and ground his foot in the gravel of the path they trod. "I've a few ideas of my own, if it comes to that; and what's more, I *bar* being hurried. I bar it most for him, knowing him as I do."

"To be sure. Yes," the other man said mildly.

"Did you look at him just now? Well, chuck that thing into the crowd, just as he is, and what will be left of him in a year's time? For I've no real hope he'll ever be different."

"You're afraid," said Thursfield slowly.

"Well, wouldn't you be?"

"No."

"Not if he was yours?"

"I believe not." He plucked a leaf or two from the hedge, and flung them away. "You see, it's like this: he sees his own way, if you don't."

"He can't see far ahead, baby as he is."

"All he needs. Good heavens, don't vex yourself, man. He'll just find his way, Antoine will." He waved a long hand. "And he'll go."

After a pause they walked on again, for they had stopped: Edgell, who seldom acted on such sudden impulse, rather ashamed, but reassured all the same. This was a remarkably reassuring fellow he was with, certainly: and he "guessed" he was a clever reading fellow, who thought about things and liked explaining them, as Edgell thought about a complicated machine. Very probably he had got a knack in the trade, and explained them right: anyway, he was a pleasant man to talk to.

They parted with the warmth of old acquaintance inside the station as the train ran in.

"Be a good boy," said Thursfield, with a manner of gentle reminder, as Tony turned to him, "and don't overdo it."

"Overdo being good?" Jem queried.

"Especially being good. Overdoing anything is exhausting and waste of time. The better the thing, the worse the waste. Lemaure, this text applies also unto you. Good-evening."

"The man is crazy," Monsieur murmured, as the train

left his thin figure on the platform. "Who ever knew me overdo anything?"

Edgell thought the boy at his side, palpably overdone, might have answered, but he was quite silent for a long while after parting with his friend. He sat in the train opposite his father, his eyes absently reviewing the landscape, his sensitive brows twitching from time to time; though whether with lately suggested thought, or pain, or mere customary nervousness, the observer could not determine. Whatever the cause, the manifestation was unconscious, for when Edgell asked him suddenly what was the matter he brought his eyes out of vacancy and stared.

"What are you frowning at?"

"Frowning—me? The sun, perhaps. I don't know."

"Then don't do it. You've nothing on your mind now."

The boy laughed slightly. "I had not before."

"Not in the train this morning?"

"Oh, except the strings. You mean that?"

"No, I don't. Are you as sure of yourself as all that?"

"Sure of *myself?* How that?" He frowned again, smoothing his brow immediately with a little shake of the head irresistibly foreign. Edgell laughed in spite of himself, and leant forward.

"*How that* is not English, Tony. Aren't you frightened of appearing in public?"

"I wasn't *before*. You see, I didn't know what would happen there."

"You knew you were going to play with a lot of people looking at you."

"Yes, I knew that. But not what sort of people."

"You little idiot. What does the sort of people matter?"

"It matters a great deal—everything. It is beastly when the room is wrong," said Antoine with an air of giving information. "It was funny, for generally that room is quite right: with Dr. Thursfield there in front, and those other men—but now, next time, I will not be sure. I think, perhaps, yes, I will be frightened next time." He looked pensive, not being permitted to frown.

"Perhaps there won't be a next time," said Edgell, dropping the other quest.

"Not just like that, no. It is never the same of course. That is so curious, in concerts."

"Perhaps you won't play in public again at all."

"Public!" said the boy, with a little accent of mockery. "How you say that, papa. I shall play my violin again at all—hein?"

"To me," said Edgell, his eyes half-closed. "Perhaps, now and then."

"Public, that is what is not you," said Antoine after a pause. M. Lemaure laughed, and he flashed a look sideways. It was not his uncle's habit to laugh at his jokes. His quick senses were stirred by some thrill of contention in the atmosphere, and it made him nervous, even with the great consolation of his father's presence. What M. Lemaure did not approach to realise, while he was silently approving his pupil's attitude, was how all his heart was straining towards that short-spoken father opposite. Monsieur knew Antoine the musician well enough, and could more or less foretell his proceedings: but it was not in him to grasp the root of the boy that his father had known from infancy. Thence, from that very incapacity, the contention sprang, and so it was bound to flourish. Edgell was a little annoyed at the last remark, its point emphasised by his brother's laugh.

"You wouldn't care to play to me," said he gruffly. "You want a roomful."

"You mean—when?"

"Any time. To-night."

"To you? To-night? Yes, if you would like."

"You don't want to. It's dull, eh?"

"Dull—it is not that that I feel, quite—" he broke short, for again M. Lucien laughed. Tony really wished he wouldn't.

"Your playing's too good for me," his father persisted angrily.

"Papa—but it is too bad—to-night." He looked aside to the view again, and his father saw he was holding back the tears with difficulty. It vexed him that he was moved so easily, a British annoyance. Why could he not be, at all events *now and then*, like other boys? Like Philip, who had such serene command of his ample wits? For the rest of the journey, Jem wrestled with his irritation in silence, answering

shortly to M. Lucien's amiable remarks. Indeed it seemed as if it were impossible actually for them both to be content.

The question of a cab was raised at Quainton station, but M. Lemaure succumbed with resignation to Antoine's decision that he wished to walk. Edgell observed that he was really very careful of the boy, according to his notions. He told him indeed that his distaste for driving was nonsensical, and contradicted every remark he made on the subject, but when it came to action, he allowed him to have his own opinion, and what is more, walked with him, much as he generally disliked that exercise. Edgell took no part in the discussion, but before he mounted his bicycle he held out his hand for the violin. At Antoine's look of horror, his face which had been impenetrably grave since their difference in the train, relaxed a little.

"I shan't smash it," he said. "Give it here."

Antoine glanced at his uncle as though for support.

"I had better carry it," he said. "I do always. I had rather."

"Give it here," said Edgell, in something the tone he had used to Philip in the morning.

"It—it's mine," said the boy. Then, as his father silently prepared to mount, "Take it, papa," he said at the last possible minute. Edgell was in his seat by the time the words were spoken, and there was barely time to shift the instrument from hand to hand. The check made him swerve dangerously, and with the extra weight suddenly thrown on him, any but an expert would have risked a fall. As it was, Antoine caught his uncle's arm in a spasm of terror, until the convoy righted, and sped ahead up the twilight road: the rider with a grim smile unseen by those behind. He really enjoyed matching his will with that of these sharp young descendants; after years of dull commanding and prompt obedience, he was fascinated by such little domestic tussles to the point of trying to provoke them.

He looked down at his rival the violin, now in his power, and was conscious of whims concerning it. Suppose he broke it—flung it in the ditch—what would that boy behind him do? It was as frail a thing, as easily crushed, as Tony him-

self, who had shown his weakness that day so abundantly. Jem Edgell set his teeth and gripped it as though the impulse was within him to take such action. A life in the wilderness inclines to despotism, and the temptation to domineer had been attacking him at intervals all day. He strove now against an obstinate attack. It was so easy for outsiders like that Thursfield to talk of standing aside: how could he, Jem, stand aside from his own kid? Tony was his special property; he had been fascinated by him as a baby, and every look and word now was reviving the fascination which had not been able quite to penetrate by means of his odd little letters. Jem "wanted" Tony: the simple word expressed his simple feeling. He wanted, as he had always done, to seize and lead him by force along the ordinary approved paths of life that he knew; he detested the idea of his wandering away into a region out of his ken. He required to keep him in sight, laughing and admiring, as he could while he was still a baby, and the strong artist spirit in infancy. The boy's present independence was tormenting; it only added to the torment that Antoine had always been clever in his own line, and if the music had not flooded his other gift, Jem was convinced he could have made of him a capital and probably original mechanician. As it was, he had to realise that such ideas were worse than useless, and that he must sit and look on while others handled and directed his own little machine. He, James, who "adored to run," who knew himself capable beyond most men of "running," must let others run his own child. "Hanged if I'll stand it," said Jem, with quite unreasonable ire, as he jumped off to walk up the last hill to Brackenhall.

With the slower motion of walking, his age and weariness returned on him, and his thoughts changed their current. His eye fell on the violin again, but it suggested revolt no longer. Where had he carried it before—and for whom? He had known well enough as he took it from his boy's hand, by an electric thrill up his arm. Commonly, she had refused to part with it, like him. But all those last months, when her troubles came upon her, she had been tired, pettishly or pathetically tired, and when the three of them went up the road to the château, he must hold it for her.

Jem walked with bent head in the dusty road, holding off the memories as he could, which were flying, whirling about his brain and heart. In the midst of that confusing pain, the wish came to him anew that he had a daughter, that that little daughter had survived who died with her in Brittany. Women were good in these unaccountable seasons of trouble; spoiled childish Henriette had been good, with her whims and mockeries, and miraculous rushes of insight and sympathy. She had kept him awake, alive; he had slept since then. Was this waking now? He reviewed the women he had known in America. What a lot there were who had been kind to him too. Brisk, wise, ingenuous girls—the best girls in the world, his intellect said, as he watched and listened to them; warm-hearted women nearer to his age, with the frankest interest in him, his heart, and the story he never told. He smiled as he remembered the little accidents of his business life—smiled, almost wondering at himself. What a fool old Ted would think him if he knew; what a fool he was, no doubt, not to be able to forget. Where was the use of remembering such things? Twelve years of ordinary orderly domesticity a man might foster the memory of gladly; not a life like his, that was meant to live at red heat, to dream of dimly sometimes—but in all reason to leave behind.

He frowned and shook himself as he turned his bicycle in at the garden gate. He had ridden the three miles, under the spur of his thoughts, very rapidly. He was fagged and hot, and glad to be home; and, talking of women, Cécile and her ménage were superb of their kind, even though their kind was French. All his young manhood had been spent in France, and he had a taste for French methods rare in an Englishman. The atmosphere of the house, as well as the scent of dinner, struck him pleasantly as he entered. He let the girl at the door relieve him of the violin before he thought, and turned quickly to correct the error.

"That is M. Antoine's," he said, speaking the language of the house on instinct.

"I know, monsieur. M. Antoine follows?"

"In about half an hour." As her eyes dwelt on him he suddenly remembered her.

"You are Yvonne Fantec," he said keenly.

"Monsieur remembers," she said, taking with serenity an address which would have abashed an English servant.

"It seems I must to-night," said Edgell, not to her. "How did you come here?"

"Monsieur himself recommended me to Madame."

"Did I? You were the clever one, yes. The baby." He studied her thoughtfully.

"I am just the age of M. Philippe," said Yvonne demurely.

"Exactly so. That was how——" He held out his hand to Philip's foster-sister. "All Fantecs are friends," he said with characteristic simplicity.

"Indeed I hope so, monsieur." She smiled, and he realised that she was a very pretty girl.

"M. Philippe used to bully you," he said, smiling too.

"He does not now," said Yvonne.

"Bet he don't," thought Edgell. "You're happy here, eh?"

"It is a pleasure to serve messieurs," said Yvonne, whose business was to serve Madame.

"Which, I wonder, now?" said Edgell to himself. He had an absurd recollection of Huntly's jest concerning the lady's maid.

"You know what to do with that?" he called back, recollecting the violin.

"He has let me carry it before," said the girl with a flash of gaiety. She was only nineteen, and she adored this family. "Will monsieur have dinner served, or wait for him?"

"I'll wait for *them*," said Edgell, looking down, and as he went on to the bathroom, he soliloquised, "Phil's out of it."

When he felt clean, Jem strolled out to where Philip reclined in a deck-chair on the lawn. He had watched him sardonically while he dressed, for he lay languidly doing nothing, with his arms behind his head, evidently still very sorry for himself indeed. Such behaviour was the thing that least in the world appealed to Jem's sympathies, unfortunately. He went up to him, and the boy's eyes lightened at his coming. To a curt question how he was, Philip replied with dignity that he was getting on. He roused himself to ask some questions about his uncle, but Jem's answers were brief and conversation did not prosper. Jem was tired himself, mind and body, and

he expected Philip to give him his chair ; but such a proceeding never occurred to the invalid himself. When Madame came softly across the lawn to them, matters between the pair of Englishmen were at a standstill, Philip eyeing his silent father rather wistfully.

Madame had her private comment : she caressed Philip and spoke to James.

" Lucien is dining, Jem," she said. " Will you not come in ? "

" Don't want to move," said Edgell like a lazy boy. He had, in the interval, relapsed into her hammock.

" That is a sign you need it," said the little lady. " Besides, the soup is too good to waste. I will bring you some."

" Cécile ! " Edgell sprang erect. " Do you never make this fellow fag ? "

" Oh, yes," said Madame, taking Philip's head between her hands. " But, you see, to-day he is not well. Darling, you ate no dinner. Won't you accompany your father ? "

" Well," said Philip, reconciling himself gracefully to this idea. " Is there enough ? "

" Plenty, for Antoine refuses ; and your father has not had your company all day." She looked with slight reproach at her brother-in-law, who seemed so unmoved by Philip's sufferings. The boy pulled himself languidly upright, and preceded them indoors.

" Where's the young one ? " Edgell asked her.

" He came in dusty, and I sent him to wash. He said he did not want to dine, and I said that was no reason for not washing. He is quite good," said Madame, " but he will argue."

" Hadn't he better have some food ? " said Edgell modestly.

" Oh, Yvonne will take him some bread and milk. One can never tell what he will do after a concert."

" He's a trouble to you, eh ? "

" Oh dear no," said the little lady. " I leave him quite alone till he gets over it. If he is rude or remiss, he is quite sweet about it afterwards—when I point it out to him. I tell Lucien he is perfectly easy to manage, if you don't get in a fuss."

" Glad to hear it," said Jem quietly. " And Phil ? "

"He lets himself be managed too," she said, her light frown melting. "Is he not improved?"

"He's grown," said Edgell. "And I hope his temper's improved with years."

"Temper? Bah, a man's nothing without that. Why, if it had not been for Lucien's temper, my life would long since have become too triste to live. It is the je ne sais quoi of unexpected in him that is so delightful." She finished the sentence in her husband's presence, for they had entered the dining-room. "Lucien, my angel, did you call for my gloves at Rayner's?"

M. Lemaure's face changed.

"Sixpence," said Philip promptly to his aunt. "I told you he'd forget."

"And I trusted you," Madame wailed. "And I lose sixpence for it to this brigand, not to mention my credit to-morrow."

"Tenez," said Monsieur, after frowning savagely for a moment. "I told Antoine to call, as he would have more time than I." He looked at her calmly triumphant.

"Good child," said Madame, sitting down relieved. "I hope he had the sense to put them in the violin-case, and not in his pocket. I found a mouse in his pocket on Saturday," she turned to Edgell, "and I gave it to the cat, and Yvonne says he cried all night. It appears it was not dead, as I thought, but only crippled by a trap; and he had projects of curing it—imagine the child. I do trust my gloves are safe."

"I'm sure they are quite safe," said Philip. "At the shop."

"Don't, darling," said Madame. "You are sure you told him, Lucien? I mean, *told*."

"I *told*—" said Monsieur. "Exactly as I told him to register my letter, and to carry two extra strings. In the very same manner."

"Did he do the other things?"

"Immaculately."

"There, Philippe. You should have more confidence in your brother."

"Like to risk another sixpence?" said Philip, who was feeling better rapidly. "He'd forget to go to the shop, to begin with. If he got there, he'd ask for the wrong thing.

If they put the right thing into his hand, he'd thank 'em nicely and leave it on the counter. Should have thought you knew him by now."

"Oh, Mary," said Madame, turning dramatically to the servant, "for Heaven's sake tell Yvonne to tell M. Antoine to come here at once. Never mind the coffee. I cannot bear the suspense."

"Why so elaborate?" Monsieur inquired, lifting an eyebrow, as the girl departed.

"Yvonne will know where to find him, and what to do. He will not have gone to bed, he was too wild when I saw him. He is probably feeding the dogs. Yvonne will know."

Yvonne herself was the first to enter, graceful and composed, the coffee-cups in her hand.

"M. Antoine will come immediately, madame"

"Where was he?"

"In his room, with the little Max. He stayed merely to wash himself."

"I told him to do *that* half an hour ago," said Madame.

"Possibly he forgot, madame," said Yvonne, as she handed the coffee to Philip.

"Possibly," said that gentleman. "I say, I had some before. I shan't sleep. Is she looking?"

"No, monsieur," said the girl; but her glance travelled to Edgell, whose eyes were on the pair.

"No, you don't," he said. "Hand me that cup, and the sugar—thank you."

"My head's awfully bad," Philip murmured.

"If monsieur would remember to draw his sun-blinds at night," said Yvonne, in a low voice, "his room would not be so hot in the morning."

"How can I remember to shut out the sun in the dark," he retorted. "You must do it."

He used the "vous," Edgell noticed. Little Yvonne on the shore had always been "tu" to him.

"You have done so, Yvonne?' said Madame, turning briskly. "And the other rooms on that side?"

"There is only M. Antoine's, madame; and he rises always so early that I thought——"

"Oh, yes, yes. I wish he would come."

"Le voilà," Yvonne said, setting down the coffee tray, and beginning to pile the plates; for they had finished their meal.

"Sure you're clean?" said Philip, as the boy entered. He cast a hasty glance down at his hands.

"You washed in the dark," said his aunt, with relentless insight. "And see what a coiffure for society. However, we will overlook that for now. Antoine, where are my gloves?"

"What?" he stammered, astonished.

"Fork out," Philip cried to her. "I told you so."

"Careless boy," she was tragically beginning, when M. Lucien cut in, rising to his feet.

"What did you do at Roxminster to-day?"

"Do?" He gazed, perfectly at sea.

"Yes. Between your arrival at the station, and the time of the concert."

The boy considered. He was quite unprepared for this sudden inquisition.

"At the station I talked to the man."

"What man?" asked Madame.

"A man I met in the train."

"Respectable?" inquired Philip pleasantly.

"No," Monsieur answered for him. "An ill-bred man. Disreputable probably."

"The friend of Uncle Ted," Antoine supplied.

"Hullo!" said Philip.

"He said so," said Monsieur. "One need not believe for a moment he was. It was an excuse to come where he was not wanted, and make himself objectionable."

"But uncle——"

"You are answering my questions, Antoine. You spoke of the concert to this—ah—stranger? Taistoi, Cécile. I have my own reasons for wishing to know."

"I said I was playing——"

"That was quite enough," said Philip as he hesitated.

"I said that we played Borodine, and he said that was what he would hear, for Borodine was his father's friend."

"Just as he was Uncle Ted's," said Philip. "Ingenious chap, this."

"Just as that, yes. I did not like him at all——"

"Did you tell him that?" said Madame, who was amused to the exclusion of the glove quest.

"I don't think so," said Antoine. "But I told him my uncle would not like him—like him to go there, I mean. I said how you would be angry"—he looked at Monsieur—"and that it was better out of doors."

"Hear, hear," said Jem Edgell through his smoke.

"Well," said Antoine, with a rapid glance, "I hated for him to come. And Uncle Ted would only laugh, though he was his friend——"

There was an exclamation that brought him up short with a jump.

"You mean your uncle was there?" Monsieur cried.

"Oh yes."

"Then he *was* his friend."

"N-no."

"Of all the—contradictory—" M. Lucien turned on him. "Why can't you tell a plain tale straight?"

"Because how it happened was mixed. I don't know why you want to know." His voice was a trifle shaky, but he stood very still and straight, with his chin up.

"Never mind. He *was* his friend if your uncle was there and spoke to him."

"Yes. No. For you see it was *how* he spoke. He looked at him *here*"—Tony touched his chest—"instead of up at his face: and his voice—oh, you know how I mean." He swung to his brother.

"He likes me," said Philip. "I never saw him look at my tie, to remember."

"But you know how I mean."

"I do," said Edgell, unexpectedly entering the field. "It is true that he can't stand Salkowski. Go on, kiddy."

"And so he would not take him away, though I wanted that. And so he came with me, and talked of Russian music."

M. Lemaure gave a snort.

"Well," said Antoine, frowning as he turned to him, "very much of what he said was right, only the way he said it was so nasty. He liked the quartette in A of——"

"Thank you." his master cut him off. "Where did you go with him?"

"To the post-office, because of the letters. And he was horrid because he carried them, and one was not there, and he said it was dropped, and really it was in his pocket all the time. That is not to amuse when it is hot in a post-office before a concert. And it was that letter with the red thing you spoke loud about——" He looked again at his inquisitor.

"There was another trifle," said Monsieur, "about which I spoke quite as loud, if not louder."

"My gloves," cried Madame.

"Gloves? No. You did not say that."

"Don't contradict. I gave you positive directions: and you thought about something else all the time."

Antoine took it in. "The red letter perhaps." He sunk his head with a sigh.

"Apologise," said his father from his smoky corner.

"Oh yes. I am very sorry." He turned to Madame, who shook her head.

"And I in my old gloves shaking hands with the world to-morrow. This comes of chattering to every odd person you meet, and so forgetting your errands."

"No," said Antoine, "for before that I had forgotten the gloves. And I did not talk to him, except not to be most rude. He talked all the time——"

"Confound him," said M. Lemaure. "He can't stop talking."

"No, you heard how: and such ugly French. He said I had the English accent and——"

"What a lie," said Philip. "Madame says your accent's better than mine."

"Your French is perfect," pronounced Madame. "The man was evidently a vulgar foreigner."

"Russians pique themselves on speaking all languages vilely," M. Lemaure cut quickly in. "His French was disgusting: his English probably worse."

"I only heard him speak English a little," said Tony reflecting. "At first in the train, and then to the young lady in the shop. And besides I did not hear what he said to her."

"Tactful you are," said Philip, while Madame's eye flew to her husband.

"Beast," Jem Edgell muttered to his pipe. "Tony, which of the shops was that? The post-office?"

"No. I can't remember the name. Where I went for the little parcel."

"Rayner's?" Madame gasped.

"Yes. Oh, was that the gloves? I am sorry." He drew back nervously from her assault, for she caught and embraced him with ardour.

"Tell your horrid brother to give me sixpence instantly: and you shall have it to do what you like with. Where are they, darling?"

He looked up puzzled, a little vaguely.

"Child," she said, drawing back. "You didn't let the monster carry them."

"No, no. He was talking to her. I put it somewhere—not in my pocket."

"Good boy," Madame encouraged him. "Inside the violin?"

"Oh, no, there was not room. I wish—I could think." He had turned his head aside, so that Edgell could not see his face; but Yvonne, from her haven behind the table, had her eyes fastened on him.

"You must have tied it on to the violin," Madame said imploringly.

"Yes. I think I must," he said, after a rather helpless pause.

"Pardon," Yvonne came into the discussion quietly. "There was nothing tied to the violin, for I saw."

"Did you?" His eyes shot to her, as in relief. "I carried it there," he repeated to himself, frowning. "Then Dr. Thursfield to the station. Then in the train, yes—then——" He turned round to his father. "Papa!"

"Quite right," said James. "You've run it down. Maybe these are your gloves, Cécile. It bumped against my hand as I rode, so I took it off and put it in my pocket. There are no dead mice there to my knowledge."

He handed a small compact parcel across. Tony gave a sharp sigh of relief.

"You knew all the time," cried Philip indignantly.

"I remembered halfway through. But I could not spoil the examination."

"You are acquitted, Antoine," said M. Lucien turning about to light a cigarette. Then, as the boy was about to escape, he stopped him by the query:

"You do not play to your father, eh?"

Antoine hesitated, taken aback by the proposal. "There is not time," he murmured.

"He does not require a concerto," said his uncle, quizzically. "And even if you play badly, he may excuse."

"He won't know," said Edgell. "He only wants a tune."

"There. I imagine you can remember a tune if you try."

"Oh, no, I have forgotten all those." The boy looked about him restlessly.

"Bah! Think and you will find a few. Observe that I amiably absent myself. Good-night, stupid." He embraced him quite kindly, and departed, still smiling, through the window, in the direction of his organ-room.

IV

"You had better play here in the library," said Madame passing towards the inner room. "It is more comfortable for hearing. Don't you think so?" She glanced at the invalid Philip.

"No," said Philip, quite crossly, to his father's surprise. During the last part of the discussion he had been silent, biting his finger in apparent impatience. "It's stuffy everywhere in the house. I call it rot to stay indoors to-night; there's a ripping sunset. Why should he play at all?"

"I understand," said Madame, a trifle surprised, "that your father wishes to hear him."

Philip glanced in his father's direction, and finding Jem's humorous eye screwed upon him, flushed up. It was so extraordinarily like the way in which he used to manœuvre for attention in the days when his fits of jealousy of Antoine were not uncommon occurrences that Edgell could have laughed aloud. Was it credible that at nineteen Philip was still jealous?

Philip, still rather red, persisted.

"He'll be no good to-night, papa. He never is after a concert. I say, come down to the pond and hear the nightjars. You said you would."

"And what about Tony?" said James.

"He can go to bed. I haven't," said Philip with a marked effort at his ordinary manner, "got a chance at you all day."

"Strikes me you had a pretty good chance if you had cared for it," said James: and walked across to the library. Philip lay a minute longer where he was, frowning, yet with a queer little smile attacking his lips; and then rose and walked after him, dropping into his favourite place on the library sofa, where his aunt made room for him. She had settled quietly to work, turning up the light above her. Music to Madame was a useful item socially, but it was sheer waste of time to allow it more than half one's attention. She glanced once over at Antoine.

"What are you waiting for, dear?" she said. "Have you not got your violin?"

"Yvonne fetches it." He was standing with his hands behind him, leaning against the writing-table. He looked tired and listless to a degree, and Jem, who had taken M. Lucien's accustomed chair, had a pang of remorse; but he had also an obstinate determination to get his dues; and he occupied the pedagogue's chair with a feeling of annihilating his adversary.

"Does she know where to find it?" said Madame.

"Yes. But she must also say 'paid for' to Max, who waits up there."

"What?" said Jem.

"Max is the dog," said Madame. "I suppose it is in your room again. I wish you would not feed it there."

"I watch him, for the crumbs," said the boy rather eagerly. "That was why I told him to trust the biscuits when I came down here. Perhaps he does not believe Yvonne."

He looked anxiously at the door. She entered at the moment.

"Le violon, monsieur," she said, extending it. "And I did not know which music."

"I want none," he said.

"And the little Max, he will not take his supper," the girl proceeded gravely. "Though I said, 'paid for' in the English voice many times."

"Oh," said Antoine, shocked. "I must go. Do you mind that, papa? You see, he was waited all this time."

"Cut along," said Edgell, beginning with one hand to unfasten the violin. Yvonne retired to the dining-room.

"How long do you bet she will take to clear away supper?" said Philip sotto voce to his aunt.

"She is always quick, darling."

"Is she? Not when there's music about. She takes hours to dust when he's practising. Didn't you ever notice that?"

'You are an observant boy," said Madame, a little piqued, glancing through the curtain at the girl. "It may take longer than you think to dust properly."

She kept awake to events, however, and she noticed that Antoine delayed a minute or two in the dining-room on his return. Question and answer passed in the tone of confidence between the pair; the girl seemed to ask him something earnestly.

"Chut, je ne peux pas," he answered just audibly, and came on to them.

"What can you not do?" said Madame, as Edgell gave up the violin, which he had been absently caressing.

"She wants him to play her favourite piece," said Philip.

"No, she does not."

"What does she want you to do then?"

"Nothing," said Tony, after a pause.

"Lying again," Philip commented; but it occurred to Jem that he had heard the truth. He had a quick attack of discomfort, and he shifted to watch the boy. The swinging chair made a grinding squeak as he turned, and Antoine started round.

"Look there," Philip scoffed. "It's nothing, ducky. He's safe in the music-room. Don't look at him, papa. It's too much for his nerves when you sit there."

"Shall I move?" said Edgell.

"No." A swift hand touched his arm. "Stay there all the time.

He stayed, as though the touch had bound him to the spot. It had stirred him strangely, he could not say why. Some incident in the past was half-awake by tone and touch, for there swept through him that common feeling of a scene known already, revived, re-lived. No doubt Jem had often thought of this moment in that distant exile of his. For homeless people, music makes a home: and when he could tie his mind to no definite beloved spot, he could tie it to this violin, which had been the master-spirit of the only home he had had. He had wished and imagined more than he knew; hence that feeling, no doubt. Now the time had come, when he could rest and look and listen, with no intruding crowd to share and spoil his pleasure.

The boy tuned by ear, fastidiously, yet with almost startling rapidity; then he hung his bow for a moment by his side, reflecting. Then he played a quick weird wild tune, with the spirit of all the gipsies in the reckless abandon of music and manner.

"Don't like that," his father pronounced.

"I know, but I must play it. Do not talk."

They all smiled; and Philip, who had been watching him

with mocking curiosity, checked the comment he had prepared. Through a little modulation that went dropping by quaint pathetic intervals, he fell into a Breton tune, one of those ancient airs which seem to hold an almost savage sadness. It had been long ago one of his earliest attempts on the strings. Now he played it with a sort of sublime carelessness, as if the bow was being drawn for him by an unseen force, not by his own hand ; some notes merely indicated, others of a quality so extraordinarily beautiful, that Philip the scoffer, who inherited a sensitive ear, lay limp and shrinking under it, rather as though he were being pelted by stones instead of sounds. Yvonne, unseen in the outer room, dropped the table-cloth she was folding, and covered her face with her hands.

" Something more cheerful, darling," said Madame in the pause, bringing her thoughts from the morrow's dinner, which she had been earnestly considering.

" Play that again," said Jem Edgell, low and fiercely.

" No, I can not—I shall not. Be quiet."

To Madame's amazement, he was crying, though he spoke with absolute steadiness. He shook the tears off like an angry little dog, and entered with barely a pause on that test of the tried artist, the Bach Chaconne. Henriette Lemaure had played that, at her first and only concert : but never the least like this. Her husband heard it stupefied. No woman played like this, for it was a man's music, conceived in the mind of a man. He had never grasped the difference before, but there it was. Where the strength came from was no matter : the boy demanded it for his conception, and it came to him somehow. His strings dropped in the middle under the stress on them, or the heat of the room ; he tuned them up in the fraction of a pause, with consummate decision and address, refusing to allow the attention of his audience to wander before he took up the great strain again. He finished with the same broad simplicity, every note glowing with life and force ; drew the last out to its full extent, and then threw the bow down on the table.

" Is—is that enough ? " he said proudly, turning.

" Quite," said James. and said no more.

Madame, whom the music had stirred to some recollection of a duty forgotten, had slipped out to speak to Yvonne.

"Oh, I say," Philip protested lazily. "He's only just beginning to get into form. Come here, kid."

Rather to Edgell's surprise the boy went slowly. Philip, without disturbing his comfortable attitude, got a good grip upon him.

"My headache," said Philip, "is much better, I am happy to tell you." Then sinking his voice to a stage-whisper. "How's yours?"

"I am quite well," said the boy, so fiercely that Jem started.

"Tem-per," said Philip in the schoolboy vein. "Just look at him! Go along and play us a rouser, I say. You could do it now."

"I shan't," Antoine snapped. But he did not pull away from the grasp upon him. Philip considered him with a gentle smile.

"The first thing," he said, "was simply vulgar. The second was rather decent in a shiverish sort of way. You're not to laugh, or you'll get hysterical." He paused to shake his victim. "The last—well, I've heard you play it better."

"You have not," said Antoine instantly; then lower, but with the most passionate rapidity: "I played that quite the best for papa: Yvonne said I shall not play the best: I said that way was no good, mostly of all to-night when I play for him. I did not play for you, at all, once!"

"Oh, thanks," said Philip, and dropped forthwith, as in duty bound, the inactive rôle of critic.

It was quite late before James, who had long since sent the boys about their business, roused himself with an effort from his twilight trance and went out to join his hostess on the verandah.

Madame Lemaure found him very good company. His character was to her new ground, which under her diligent turning-up, rewarded her continually with little treasures of diverting oddity. Such impassivity as his was a challenge too; after all, as she argued, he could not be without perceptions, else he had never married Henriette. Now, as she pursued his acquaintance, and forced his reticence by steady degrees, she began inevitably to understand how Henriette had been led on: to follow the stages that had been dark to her of that old romance.

He relieved as well as interested her. Before he arrived in the house, she had quite thought to have to find subjects

for him laboriously, and to prune her sallies to suit his British taste: but she had found very soon that he was quite equal to her, in thought if not in utterance: not a little to her surprise, for it was her pet theory that Philip inherited his wit from the French side. True, his manner was blunt to excess, his Americanisms displeased her critical ear, and he rode down her pretty inaccuracies with scant courtesy. Yet when annoyance at this incited her to talk her best, he gave her a sort of eager attention which excelled flattery; and relics of his French upbringing showed here and there in his manner of caring for her, in offering small service, or in the little "politesses" of approaching or leaving her: though he had an air of being out of practice in them which kept him fresh and simple.

In the interest of her new plaything, it was quite a long time before Madame remembered her old.

"Where is Philippe?" she said suddenly.

Yvonne, who was fetching the letters, answered her.

"M. Philippe is upstairs, Madame."

James smiled. "Sulking," he soliloquised. "I bet."

Yvonne gave him an odd glance in passing, and carried the letters out.

"He is so proud," said little Madame, with a touch of pleading. "And, you know, you have neglected him to-day."

"I guess it won't hurt him," said Jem. But he rose the next instant. "Do you want I should go up and pat him down?" he inquired.

"He really wished to walk with you to the pond," she said, looking up. "He lies out there for hours at night sometimes."

"Very bad for him," Jem pronounced.

"I know," she said sadly, "but he will not be careful of himself."

"Think not?" Jem laughed. "I was not thinking of rheumatism just then. There are worse things to catch at his age."

"How then?"

"Fine feelings," he drawled, lingering beside her. "He's quite moonstruck enough as it is."

"Mon Dieu!" said Madame, and settled comfortably against her cushions. "Go and discover some more."

He laughed and left her.

"Pardon," said Yvonne in the hall. "Would monsieur go quietly at the top?'

"Baby asleep?" said Jem, smiling at her openly.

"It is so possible that not," said Yvonne, too serious to smile. "And if he hears monsieur arrive to M. Philippe——"

James nodded. "Nice girl," he thought, and went up very gently indeed. Big as he was, he was not at all clumsy, and he could go like a cat.

To his surprise on reaching the top floor, Philip's outer door stood open, and his room showed dark within, except for a shaft of faint light through Antoine's open door.

James promptly confounded him internally for keeping the kid awake. Yet, stopping to listen, he did not hear the conversation he expected. Only a single steady voice sounded from the inner room: so different from Philip's tone in ordinary dialogue that for a minute his father hardly recognised it. Jem listened for an instant, standing without so still that not a board creaked.

"Poetry, by all that's remarkable," said he to himself, and advanced with the guarded quiet of an Indian in the backwoods to stalk his boys and overhear.

As it happened, no stage arrangement could have supplied a more perfect protection than the outer darkened room for listening and observing unseen. Jem was wary and did not stay there long, for in his first hasty observation of the pair within he saw that the reader's object in reading was all but accomplished. The younger boy lay in the abandonment of utter repose, dramatic, as it were, even in unconsciousness. He was hardly covered, for the night was hot; and it struck his father again almost with a shock to observe, now the fires within were cut off, how colourless and unsubstantial he looked, as though a sudden strong breath from his open window could dispose of him bodily. One of his capable delicate hands lay out in his brother's direction, and Philip had it by the wrist, much as if he were compelling by contact as well as voice.

Philip had a good voice, and his aunt had trained him to read well, for Madame Lemaure would have nothing slipshod in those who served her. James, who recognised all thorough work, even in the departments of "culture" he had seen fit

to mock to Huntly, recognised the present performance as adequate. What he was reading was difficult to the engineer's simple mind: a maze of words too puzzling to thread at a first hearing, though by its clearness and careful accent it roused interest in him and curiosity. He felt, in spite of himself, that Philip understood and relished it: that he was not uttering mechanically but thinking as he read. As for colour, there was none at all: for the boy kept his tone guardedly level, almost on a single note. Reaching the end without a drop of voice, he glanced sideways a minute. Then, as if the signs contented him, he took up another book and read one short fragment; so different from the first in its simplicity and tranquillity that the father, lingering in the dark to smile at his "elegance," was struck down with ease additional by the contrast.

He read it as before, clearly, on a level tone, but at a much slower pace, and it was even more carefully uttered. At the end Jem observed that his eyes were off the book, so that the lucid lines had oddly the effect of incantation. Indeed, he guessed on instinct that it was an accustomed charm; though upon himself it had the contrary effect, "stabbing his spirit awake" to memory.

And though within it no birds sing,
And though no pillared house is there,
And though the apple-boughs are bare
Of fruit and blossom, would to God
Her feet upon the green grass trod,
And I beheld them as before!

There comes a murmur from the shore. . . .
The shore no ship has ever seen,
Still beaten by the billows green,
Whose murmur comes unceasingly
Unto the place for which I cry.

For which I cry both day and night,
For which I let slip all delight,
That maketh me both deaf and blind,
Careless to win, unskilled to find,
And quick to lose what all men seek. . . .

Yet tottering as I am, and weak,
Still have I left a little breath
To seek within the jaws of death
An entrance to that happy place :
To seek the unforgotten face
Once seen, once kiss'd, once reft from me
Anigh the murmuring of the sea.

Jem fled, softly and swiftly as he had come. He went down into the garden and waited for Philip. The little spark moving on the lawn, and the well-known aroma of his tobacco —that pleasant, mysterious scent which had been used to indicate to the acute young rebel of Porslanec the quarter in which danger lay—showed the mature Philip now where he strolled. Emerging soon after his father, he stood tall and black against the light of the verandah for a minute, and then dropped down with the swoop of one of his favourite owls on to the noiseless velvet grass.

James always took his time.

"Phil," he said presently at leisure, "I've been eaves-dropping."

"I thought I heard you," said Philip the detective, who had not been deceived by the stalker.

"Do you often read to him ? "

"Only sometimes. I don't," said Philip gravely, "let him get accustomed to it. You see, since last winter he gets nervous of not sleeping now and then."

"Specially," said James, "when he plays last thing, and goes to bed excited, eh ? "

"You couldn't know," said the boy rather gruffly.

"Couldn't I ? Thank you." Edgell drew his arm close. "Strikes me you gave me a pretty broad hint. Say, Phil, I flattered myself you were jealous of him, and wanted my company."

Philip gave a quick laugh, which exonerated him of the charge as well as any words could have done.

"Oh well," he said, "the night-jars will be going still down there. They keep it up for hours." He had been pulling Jem firmly and gently in the direction he desired. His father had always had the intelligence to care for birds.

"Can he rise," asked Jem, stalking guardedly after him, "to those things you read?"

"I don't know. You can never tell what he rises to or what he doesn't. I think really it hardly matters what it is—for sense I mean. It's just the sound of it takes him and makes him sleepy after a time."

"So you choose what *you* like, hey?"

The boy laughed. "Well, Browning's a bit stiff for a kid of that age, isn't it?"

"That last thing wasn't Browning."

"Not much. That's the other sort—full of sound. He's cracked on anything about the sea. I often read him that."

"It sticks in your head," said Jem reflectively. "I never knew I liked poetry."

"It reminds me of him," said Philip.

"Him?" James was thinking of her, and the murmuring shores of Brittany.

Philip quoted to himself:

Which maketh me both deaf and blind,
Careless to win, unskilled to find,
And quick to lose what all men seek.

"That's like him. It's funny," said Philip suddenly, "when I first read that, it made me think of something grandpapa said to me ages ago, when I was a kid, about having a thing for which you care most of all, which makes you throw away the common things for it—like that. I felt such a fool for not having one at the time. I remember it," said Philip solemnly, "like yesterday."

"You have got something now, eh?"

"Since last summer. His getting ill here started it; and what grandpapa said to me about Savigny did the rest. Yes, I know what I want now, right enough."

Edgell was silent. What a fool he was! Phil's letters were always so clever, so cool, that the evidence of his actions during the earlier part of Tony's illness had been obscured by his own rendering of them. Jem, feeling his way down the dark path to the pond, and through the tall bracken in his son's wake, chuckled mightily at himself: that in all his frequent and careful reviews of Philip's education in old days,

he should have left out this one item : that in all the attention he had given separately to the characters of his pair of sons, it had never struck him to consider how they would react on one another.

Standing lately in the dark to hear Philip read, he had had a vision of the fine healer he might become, and had seen also the quarter in which he had learnt understanding and self-forgetfulness—so much more important in the great work he had chosen than the exact knowledge to which his Radfield prizes bore witness ; and he recognised that in doing his utmost to be just to one boy, he had arrived at injustice to the other.

So while they lay together in the dew-damp heather, and watched the night-jars leaping and whirring, and enjoyed the sweet remembered scents of the English summer night in companionable silence, Jem took his resolution, and coming back he told the boy straight and simply his change of plan for Antoine and what he meant to do.

Jem, like Tony, did nothing by halves. He dropped that evening once for all the autocratic attitude to Philip which he had so unconsciously resumed from old habit, and took up that of friendship instead, showing himself frankly in full, as his manner was to all his friends. The boy, sensitive and quick in perception, responded to it instantly. Jem felt him older at once, nearer in one surprising stride to the man he was so eager to make him.

Giving every man his due James started from apology.

" I don't say he's not a lot to be thankful for," he explained, " from others and from you. You made a real good effort to set him straight with that world you and I know at school. I don't propose for a moment he's anything to complain of there." He put a hand on the shoulder level with his. " He's had a fair sample of that life, one that most kids of his age love best, and get plenty of good by too. But "—he paused— " I am not one to deny there are others. He laid his case against it last night, and I've been trying to see things straight for him all day. It's a jolly hard business for an old fellow like me, taken sudden as it were, and working alone ; and on and off I got mad and wouldn't see it. I've funked these bothers, and now they come rushing upon me—serve me right."

The vigour of the confession nearly swept Philip into laughter in the midst of his surprise.

"Well," Jem proceeded gravely. "Now, there's me. I've seen a bit of the world, the biggest sort of world, where things are real, and not very pretty. First sight, you wouldn't say it was his. But I guess there are just a few people born wanting things real from the start—won't stand imitations at any price. I'm ready to believe that—now."

He paused again to draw breath, not finding it easy to speak what he thought. The finger and thumb of the hand on Philip's shoulder worked gently while he considered, as though slowly sifting out some substance very fine and precious.

"I can't pull his music to pieces," he said, with a spark of humour, "as you did lately in the library. It's a trick I've never learnt. But I've a kind of feeling about it, that your mother always said: and I know those big things he plays are all right, no shoddy. He always could make us cry—I didn't want to know that. I want my kids to do straight work, no matter to me what sort: and if it's beautiful on top—well, the Lord's very good." After another grave pause, he went ahead again. "He's pulled me over to-night, you see, with that little bow of his. Your uncle tells me he can earn his living—yes, right away, if he chooses. I'll let him try, provided he really wants it. Well?"

Philip caught him in a sudden spasm.

"Dad," he gasped, "give us a minute."

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know. It's miraculous. It—it's true. And it's the rummest thing I ever met."

"Hold up," said Jem with a laugh. "What is?"

"The whole thing. It's the infernal simplicity of it upsets me. Is it the sort of way you do things in America, sir?"

"It's the way of reason, seems to me. When a thing is no use, I chuck it. It may be a patent method, but it don't apply. Over it goes."

"Is that how you'll put it to Alexander?" said Philip.

"Well, not precisely. I rather think I'll pay for his absence next term with a freer mind than his presence, though."

"Yes. Simplest thing in the world." Philip pondered. "Don't believe it would ever have struck me," he mused wondering.

"You're not the father of a family just yet," said Jem.

"No. But what I mean is, I'd got it stuck in my head it was his fault. I didn't see how it could be any one else's —unless it was mine." He sighed. "Do you mean you are going to take charge?"

"I shall for a time. I must thresh it out with your uncle and his lot. I won't have him hustled, anyway," declared Jem, "however keen they are to show him."

Philip laughed again with intense amusement.

"Like to have your brother on the hoardings?" James asked him.

"No," said Philip. "Not a bit. Good Lord," he added with indignation, "what would the fellows say?"

"Nurse up the idea a bit," his father advised, as they mounted the verandah steps. "We shall have to get used to it. Now get in and change your feet, or we shall have you in pneumonia again."

"DEAR G," wrote Philip to his friend.

"When things are actually happening, you can't write, so stow it. I don't mind looking you up at Oxford once in a way, but I mean to see less of you now we have left school, so I am not coming to live there. Papa and I talked about it. I said it was much better for you to get on alone a bit; and he said he didn't want to see me a tame cat to the aristocracy —he'd always thought I was too good for that.

"So, instead of that, I am going to stay with my grandpapa in Paris, who is bored with living alone, and who happens to hang out rather near to the best school of medicine in Europe. It is a bit awkward my not knowing any of the French names for things—stinking things, I mean—so until they know me better down there, they may think I have been badly educated. I shall have to wear my hair long, because it is the local custom, but I'll have it cut before I come to see you at Christ Church.

"The best of it is, the kid's off his head with jealousy. Of course, as I tell him, I never deceived him that gra papa

liked me best. He's been pretty average cracked lately, has the kid. He's not going back to Radfield next term. That's another of my father's little notions. My father really is an original sort of fellow in his way : I'd rather like you to know him. He thinks Radfield is wasted on the kid, and I've come round to his opinion. It had really never struck me till he mentioned it, had it you ?

" Tony is awfully pleased, only he thought Alexander would miss him a bit, so he wrote him a letter. Took papa awfully aback, because he had been stewing all the afternoon to put it nicely to Alexander, and then the kid dropped in and explained that he had saved him the trouble. I laughed. You see, papa had been telling me he meant to run Tony, and I refrained from smiling at the time to spare his feelings ; so when the above occurred I naturally smiled, and he was vexed.

" Dad roared over the letter, but he wouldn't let me see it ; beastly unfair that was, because he would never have opened it at all if I hadn't persuaded him, he's such an honourable fellow naturally. But we really couldn't let it go unread, because the kid's capable of anything. He might have talked about me for all I knew. As it was, he said in a postscript—after he had sent his love to the dog—that he'd like to see Alexander any time he happened to be up in London, provided he—the kid—had time. Bet you what you like he sends him a ticket for his first concert next April ; and I should not wonder if your master gets one too.

" Yours etcetera,
" P. J. E."

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